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Second Century Incarnational Christology and Early Catholic Christianity

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In ipsa item catholica ecclesia magnopere curandum est, ut id teneamus,
quod ubique, quod simper, quod ad omnibus creditum est;
hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.

Now in the catholic church itself we take the greatest care to hold
that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all;
that is truly and properly catholic.

St. Vincent of Lérins, 434 CE

———————

Ὅπου ἄν ᾖ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς,
ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

Wherever Christ Jesus is,
there is the catholic church.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, 110 CE

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in this study conform to those published in *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999). The abbreviations below are those most frequently used in this study.

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Barn.	*Letter of Barnabas*
1 Clem.	*1 Clement (Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians)*
2 Clem.	*2 Clement (An Early Christian Sermon)*
Did.	*The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)*
Diogn.	*Letter to Diognetus*
Herm. *Mand.*	*Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate*
Herm. *Sim.*	*Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude*
Herm. *Vis.*	*Shepherd of Hermas, Vision*
Ign. *Eph.*	Ignatius, *To the Ephesians*
Ign. *Magn.*	Ignatius, *To the Magnesians*
Ign. *Smyrn.*	Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans*
Ign. *Phld.*	Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians*
Ign. *Rom.*	Ignatius, *To the Romans*
Ign. *Pol.*	Ignatius, *To Polycarp*
Ign. *Trall.*	Ignatius, *To the Trallians*
Mart. Pol.	*Martyrdom of Polycarp*
Pol. *Phil.*	Polycarp, *To the Philippians*

APOCRYPHA AND NAG HAMMADI TRACTATES

1 Apoc. Jas.	*First Apocalypse of James*
2 Apoc. Jas.	*Second Apocalypse of James*
Acts John	*Acts of John*
Act Pet.	*Act of Peter*
Acts Pet.	*Acts of Peter*
Acts Pet. 12 Apos.	*Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*

Ap. Jas.	*Apocryphon of James*
Apoc. Adam	*Apocalypse of Adam*
Apoc. Paul	*Apocalypse of Paul*
Apoc. Pet.	*Apocalypse of Peter*
Ap. John	*Apocryphon of John*
Asclepius	*Asclepius 21–29*
Auth. Teach.	*Authoritative Teaching*
Dial. Sav.	*Dialogue of the Savior*
Disc. 8–9	*Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*
Ep. Apost.	*Epistula Apostolorum*
Ep. Pet. Phil	*Letter of Peter to Philip*
Eugnostos	*Eugnostos the Blessed*
Exeg. Soul	*Exegesis of the Soul*
Gos. Eg.	*Gospel of the Egyptians*
Gos. Judas	*Gospel of Judas*
Gos. Mary	*Gospel of Mary*
Gos. Pet.	*Gospel of Peter*
Gos. Phil.	*Gospel of Philip*
Gos. Thom.	*Gospel of Thomas*
Gos. Truth.	*Gospel of Truth*
Great Pow.	*Concept of Our Great Power*
Hyp. Arch.	*Hypostasis of the Archons*
Hypsiph.	*Hypsiphrone*
Interp. Know.	*Interpretation of Knowledge*
Melch.	*Melchizedek*
Norea	*Thought of Norea*
Odes Sol.	*Odes of Solomon*
On Anoint.	*On the Anointing*
On Bap. A	*On Baptism A*
On Bap. B	*On Baptism B*
On Euch. A	*On the Eucharist A*
On Euch. B	*On the Eucharist B*
Orig. World	*On the Origin of the World*
Paraph. Shem	*Paraphrase of Shem*
Plato Rep.	*Plato, Republic 588b–589b*
Pr. Paul	*Prayer of the Apostle Paul*
Pr. Thanks.	*Prayer of Thanksgiving*
Sent. Sextus	*Sentences of Sextus*
Soph. Jes. Chr.	*Sophia of Jesus Christ*
Steles Seth	*Three Steles of Seth*

Teach. Silv.	*Teachings of Silvanus*
Testim. Truth	*Testimony of Truth*
Thom. Cont.	*Book of Thomas the Contender*
Thund.	*Thunder: Perfect Mind*
Treat. Res.	*Treatise on the Resurrection*
Treat. Seth	*Second Treatise of the Great Seth*
Tri. Trac.	*Tripartite Tractate*
Trim. Prot.	*Trimorphic Protennoia*
Val. Exp.	*A Valentinian Exposition*
Zost.	*Zostrianos*

OTHER EARLY LITERATURE

Arist. *Apol.*	Aristides of Athens, *Apology*
Eus. *Hist. eccl.*	Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica*
Iren. *Adv. haer.*	Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*
Just. *Dial.*	Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*
Just. *1 Apol.*	Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*
Just. *2 Apol.*	Justin Martyr, *2 Apology*
LXX	Septuagint
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex
Pliny, *Lib.*	Pliny the Younger, *Letters*

CHAPTER 1. MANY CHRISTOLOGIES, MANY CHRISTIANITIES?

Whether one asks, 'Quid sit christianum esse?' or explores 'das Wesen des Christentums,' the question, 'What is Christianity?' looms over scholarly investigations on the origins of Christianity as well as studies on its expansion and doctrinal development in the early centuries.[1] The question of early Christian identity has been asked and answered in a variety of ways by scholars from various confessional and presuppositional backgrounds. Yet the search for an 'essence' of Christianity—or the rejection of such an essence—that will satisfactorily explain both unity and diversity in the earliest centuries remains elusive, as the answers to the question are nearly as numerous as the scholars who ask it.

THE CONTEXT OF THE QUESTION

In the last decade of the twentieth century, Arland Hultgren described four twentieth-century approaches to the issue of continuity from Jesus to early Christianity. The first, or 'traditional view,' is the model of a true apostolic doctrine that preceded heresy, that is, 'after the death of the apostles, evil and crafty persons perverted the teachings of the Lord and his apostles.'[2] The

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[1] See Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders, 2d rev. edn (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1903).

[2] Arland J. Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 8. Hultgren ties this view to not only Eusebius, Tertullian, and Hegesippus but also to Clement of Rome and even Paul himself. This view is often associated with a confessional historiography, but see Simone Pétrement, *Le Dieu séparé: les origines du gnosticisme* (Paris: Cerf,

second view is illustrated by the 'Bauer Thesis,' that 'in many geographical areas of antiquity that which would be called "heresy" at later times was actually the original manifestation of Christianity.'[3] Thus, in this model, heresy preceded orthodoxy. Hultgren associated the third model with the work of H. E. W. Turner and the interaction of 'fixed and flexible elements' in the development of orthodoxy.[4] The final model is that of Robinson and Koester, with their dynamic theory of diverse trajectories developing simultaneously from the beginning and never coalescing, but rather fragmenting into distinct Christianities.[5]

Today, statements like Lyman's have become common: 'Revisions of our understanding of ancient culture and religious identity must … prompt re-evaluations of our assumptions concerning the history of Christian identity and theology.'[6] Historians have appealed to modern studies on self-definition, rhetoric, and polemics of various social, philosophical, religious, and political groups in Greco-Roman antiquity as new lenses through which one can better understand ancient Christian self-definition. They often argue that early Christians' understanding of their own identity was not distinct or stable until at least the late

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1984).

[3] Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 9. The original German publication was Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, Beitrage zur historischen Theologie, vol. 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1934). This work—and its own legacy—will be discussed below, pp. 9–11.

[4] Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 14. See the original work in H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: Mowbray, 1954).

[5] James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). The same theories of diversity and conflict can be seen in more recent and popular books like Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1978).

[6] Rebecca Lyman, 'Hellenism and Heresy: 2002 NAPS Presidential Address,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 212.

second century.[7] Rather than identifying a coalition of Christian communities centered on a shared tradition about Jesus, more and more scholars speak of many christologies and many Christianities in early Christian history.

Indeed, the study of the second century church seems to have become a study in dichotomies: continuity and discontinuity, fixed and flexible, central and marginal, unity and diversity, orthodoxy and heresy. In the storm of ideas that have contributed to the scholarly debates concerning the rise of catholic Christianity,[8] two names have risen to the fore, and scholars in the last century have had to take their foundational works into account. Regardless of how historians position themselves in relationship to these scholars, the legacies of Adolf von Harnack and Walter Bauer have established the course along which—and the context within which—scholarly discussions on catholic Christian development and identity take place today.[9] It is therefore within the streams of

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[7] Dunn writes, 'The history of Christianity between 70 and 180 is much more complex … than has traditionally been thought. … The historical reality was evidently much more of a tension and struggle between competing ideas/faiths/practices than the disputed but apparently irresistible emergence of the great church with a clearly defined rule of faith and clearly defined structures' (James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, Christianity in the Making, vol. 3 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 40).

[8] I use the term 'catholic Christianity' to refer to those local communities of Christians that maintained some degree of unity and amicable relationships with other communities in various parts of the empire. As will be shown in this study, the intersecting network of Christian communities that made up this web of catholicity in the first several decades of the second century maintained their relationships through personal visits, correspondence, and jointly sponsored tasks or missions. The *nature* of this unity will be the focus of this study.

[9] See Alain Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe–IIIe siècles* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1985), 13–20; Gerd Lüdemann, *Primitive Christianity: A Survey of Recent Studies and Some New Proposals*, trans. John Bowden (London: T. & T. Clark, 2003), 5–6; Robert L. Wilken, 'Diversity and Unity in Early Christianity,' *Second Century* 1 (1981): 101.

scholarly tradition since Harnack and Bauer that the questions of definition and self-identity in early catholic Christianity must be asked and answered.

The Legacy of Harnack

In his second volume of *History of Dogma*, Adolf von Harnack pointed to three foundations of the 'catholic church': 'an "apostolic" law of faith, a collection of "apostolic" writings, and finally, an "apostolic" organisation.'[10] Harnack's inclusion of quotation marks around 'apostolic' should not be ignored, for he argued that although later catholic writers affirmed that these elements had first-generation apostolic origins, in fact the concrete of these foundations was poured and hardened throughout the second century.[11] Harnack wrote, 'In opposition to Gnosticism and Marcionitism, the main articles forming the estate and possession

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Regarding Harnack's influence on twentieth studies on the origins of catholic Christianity, see Jarolsav Pelikan, *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* (New York: Corpus, 1971), 58–67.

[10] Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanen, vol. 2 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1910), 1. Harnack did not entirely invent the convenient threefold pillars of catholic orthodoxy himself, but confirmed these as the definition of catholic Christianity in modern scholarship. These three foundations already appeared in late second century defenses of the catholic faith in writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others (see Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 21–39; Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.1.15). Yet prior to Harnack, these threefold marks of the identity of catholic Christianity were difficult to find in such simple terms. So, for example, Philip Schaff discussed the development of the episcopacy, the canon, and the rule of faith through the second and third centuries, but regarded these as developments within apostolic Christianity, not necessarily as the three identifying marks of a new and distinct 'catholic Christianity' (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2d rev. edn, vol. 2, *Ante-Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100–325* [New York: Scribner's, 1916]). Also see Ernest Renan, *The History of the Origins of Christianity, Comprising the Reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius (A.D. 117–161)* [London: Mathieson, 1888], iii–iv).

[11] Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 206–8.

of orthodox Christianity were raised to the rank of apostolic regulations and laws, and thereby placed beyond all discussion and assault.'[12] Harnack placed this 'fixing of the tradition under the title of apostolic' as the result of the conflicts between the free and independent spirit that marked primitive Christianity and the structures of doctrine and institutions of later Hellenized Christianity, which conflicts raged throughout the second century.[13]

Yet Harnack argued that the emergent catholic identity of the second century never in fact clearly defined what it meant to be 'Christian.' That catholic Christian identity developed in reaction to the threat of Gnosticism in the second century was presupposed in Harnack's history of dogma:

> The conflict with Gnosticism made it necessary to find some sort of solution to the question, 'What is Christian?' and to fix this answer. But indeed the Fathers were not able to answer the question confidently and definitely. They therefore made a selection from tradition and contented themselves with making it binding on Christians.[14]

The 'fixing of the tradition,' according to Harnack, corresponded with the establishment of the collection of apostolic writings.[15] Thus, in Harnack's model of early Christian history, 'catholic Christianity' and, indeed, catholic self-identity, developed in reaction to forces of acute Hellenization—especially Gnosticism and the Marcionites—that threatened to take Christianity too far from its Jewish and Old Testament roots. Thus, catholic self-identity did not find clear expression apart from the rise of the primitive Christian canon of apostolic Scripture, the consistent 'rule of faith,' and the establishment of ecclesiastical structures and authority, which elements coalesced into a clear catholic identity only near the end of the second century with figures like Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus (see Figure 1).[16]

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[12] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 1.

[13] Ibid., 2.

[14] Ibid., 8.

[15] Ibid., 8, note 7.

[16] Ibid., 9.

Figure 1: Adolf von Harnack's development of catholic Christian identity
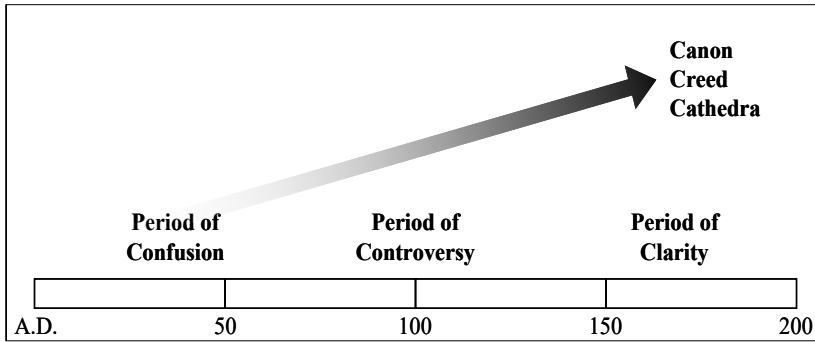
With these first theologians of late second century catholic Christianity Harnack associated the centrality of the doctrine of the incarnation. He wrote:

> But in yet another respect Irenaeus and Hippolytus denote an immense advance beyond the Apologists, which, paradoxically enough, results both from the progress of Christian Hellenism and from a deeper study of the Pauline theology, that is, emanates from the controversy with Gnosticism. In them a religious and realistic idea takes the place of the moralism of the Apologists, namely, the deifying of the human race through the incarnation of the Son of God. The apotheosis of mortal man through his acquisition of immortality (divine life) is the idea of salvation which was taught in the ancient mysteries. It is here adopted as a Christian one, supported by the Pauline theology (especially as contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians), and brought into the closest connection with the historical Christ, the Son of God and Son of man (filius dei et filius hominis).[17]

So, in Harnack's model of the rise of catholic Christianity, even as late as the middle of the second century, Christian churches still

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[17] Ibid., 10–11.

grasped for a clear sense of catholic identity.[18] Yet Harnack acknowledged that something had to have distinguished Christians from non-Christians before that time. What was it that united Christians in the early decades before the rise of catholic Christianity? Harnack answered, 'There was a time when the majority of Christians knew themselves to be such, (1) because they had the "Spirit" and found in that an indestructible guarantee of their Christian position, (2) because they observed all the commandments of Jesus.'[19] Thus, the subjective experience of the Spirit, described elsewhere as the 'warmth and spontaneity' of the Christian religious life,[20] and the objective observance of the *logia* of Jesus were the earliest loose standards of Christian self-identity. One can see, given these vague and subjective definitional centers, that such an association of communities would have been open to fragmentation through diversity and conflict.

In sum, Harnack's construction of the rise of catholic Christianity and its relationship to incarnational christology involved a central incarnational idea that grew out of the conflicts of the middle and late second century, expressed most forcefully in turn-of-the-century fathers like Irenaeus and Hippolytus, which eventually supplanted competing concepts of Christian identity. This centering of catholic dogma coincided with the coronation of the 'apostolic' triumvirate of canonical Scripture, the creedal rule of faith, and the ordained ecclesiastical offices.

Since Harnack, scholars have continued to define catholic Christianity—and thus identify its emergence—with the crystallization of these three pillars of canon, creed, and cathedra.[21]

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[18] Harnack pointed to Justin in the middle of the second century as 'he who began the great literary struggle for the expulsion of heterodoxy … but, judging from those writings of his that have been preserved to us, it seems very unlikely that he was already successful in finding a fixed standard for determining orthodox Christianity' (ibid., 24).

[19] Ibid., 25.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Von Campenhausen's notes, 'The concept, which Harnack popularised, of "Early Catholicism" is characterised by the validity of three constitutive norms—Bible, Creed, and Episcopate. It is, however, a

In the first issue of the journal *Second Century*, Outler reprinted an article originally published in 1968, in which he noted:

> The mid-second century is a crepuscular zone for the Christian community, with undisciplined experiments in liturgy, polity and doctrine going on all over the place, with 'heresy' preceding and outpacing 'orthodoxy,' with 'catholic Christianity' 'developing' but by no means yet shaped or firm in its faith and order. The *rudiments* of a baptismal symbol, a canon of Scripture and a catholic polity are all there—in nuclear fragments—but the course of their development is still highly contingent.[22]

This same identification of the three *sine qua non* of catholic Christianity has become rather common and is virtually unchallenged, though variously stated and sometimes more carefully nuanced.[23] Because these three pillars are clearly found

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misleading abstraction which in no way corresponds to the self-understanding of the early Church. Even in later antiquity there is not a single text known to me which links these three things as normative' (Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*, trans. J. A. Baker [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972], 329). Interestingly, Ritter notes that the notion of Harnack's three norms 'had been common' until Campenhausen's criticism, and that Campenhausen's research on confession, the canon, and ecclesiastical law had been more or less well-received by scholarship (Adolf M. Ritter, ' "Orthodoxy," "Heresy" and the Unity of the Church in pre-Constantinian Times,' *Studia patristica* 24 [1993]: 322–27). Nevertheless, the tendency to continue defining catholic Christianity by the three norms persists, as I demonstrate below, note 23.

[22] Albert C. Outler, 'Methods and Aims in the Study of the Development of Catholic Christianity,' *Second Century* 1 (1981): 11. The original article appeared as Albert C. Outler, 'Methods and Aims in the Study of the Development of Catholic Christianity,' *Anglican Theological Review* 50 (1968): 117–30.

[23] See Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods: Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 86–88, 100–4; Veselin Kesich, *Formation and Struggles: The Church AD 33–450*, part 1, *The Birth of the Church AD 33–200*, The Church in History, ed. Andrew

functioning together only near the end of the second century, many historians date the most reasonable *terminus a quo* for the rise of a distinct catholic Christian identity in the late second century.[24]

The Legacy of Bauer

In 1934 Walter Bauer published his now legendary thesis that certain forms of Christianity that the church later regarded as 'heresies' were originally not distinguished as such but were in some places the earlier and stronger forms of Christianity while the form that eventually identified itself as orthodox catholic Christianity was sometimes a later minority (see Figure 2).[25] Such diverse forms of Christianity were necessarily characterized by diverse christological narratives. The general validity of the Bauer thesis was mostly accepted by peer reviewers in Germany immediately after its 1934 publication.[26] Though many scholars

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Louth, vol. 1 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 189; John Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1955), 101–29; Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf, vol. 2, *The Founding of the Church Universal* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1961), 57; Alfred Loisy, *The Birth of the Christian Religion*, trans. L. P. Jacks (London: George Allen and Unwit, 1948), 325–59; Lüdemann, *Primitive Christianity*, 3; Rebecca Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, The New Church's Teaching Series, ed. James E. Griffiss, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cowley, 1999), 38; Richard A. Norris Jr., 'Articulating Identity,' in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 89; Jeffrey S. Siker, 'Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries,' in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2000), 253–55.

[24] For example, Frend assigns a window of 135 to 193 CE (W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 229–66).

[25] Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*; Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

[26] See the helpful—though hardly impartial—discussion in Georg Strecker and Robert A. Kraft, 'Appendix 2: The Reception of the Book,' in Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 286–316. Today, there

have disagreed with Bauer's evidences, arguments, and answers concerning the development of orthodoxy and heresy,[27] they have generally agreed that the traditional view was untenable and that early Christianity was characterized even by 'radical diversity.'[28] Several scholars since have sought to confirm and strengthen many of Bauer's assertions.[29]

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are few scholars who would actually defend 'the Bauer thesis' as it originally stood in 1934. However, the basic thesis that the early church was characterized by diversity and conflict, and that 'orthodoxy' was merely one of many developing and competing forms of Christianity, is widely accepted. This emphasis on diversity and conflict in earliest Christianity can still generally be termed 'the Bauer thesis.'

[27] The most thorough critiques of Bauer's thesis include Thomas A. Robinson, *The Bauer Thesis Examined: The Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 11 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1988); Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth*. Other shorter critiques include Michel Desjardins, 'Bauer and Beyond: On Recent Scholarly Discussions of Αιρεσις in the Early Christian Era,' *Second Century* 8 (1991): 65–82; Frederick W. Norris, 'Ignatius, Polycarp, and I Clement: Walter Bauer Reconsidered,' *Vigiliae christianae* 30 (1976): 23–44; Frederick W. Norris, 'Asia Minor before Ignatius: Walter Bauer Reconsidered,' *Studia evangelica* 7 (1982): 365–77.

[28] Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 114. Also see Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 176.

[29] Helmut Koester, 'The Structure and Criteria of Early Christian Beliefs,' in *Trajectories through Early Christianity*, ed. James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 205–31; Georg Strecker, 'On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,' in *Early Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Everett Ferguson, Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays, ed. Everett Ferguson, David M. Scholer, and Paul Corby Finney, vol. 6 (New York: Garland, 1993), 31–75.

Figure 2: Walter Bauer's development of catholic Christian identity
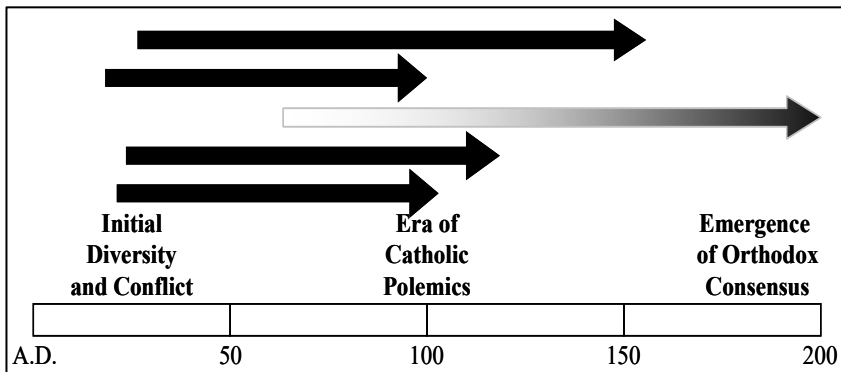
In light of Bauer's thesis, New Testament and patristic scholars today hold a variety of views concerning unity and diversity in early Christianity as well as what—if anything—constituted Christian identity. On one end of the spectrum non-confessional scholars may speak of diverse Christianities, christologies, and churches that competed for converts or waged a war of words as traditions vied for dominance. On the other end confessional scholars may refer to an original Christianity versus secondary schismatics, the true christology versus false christs, and the one catholic church versus heretical sects. Though few historians would want to be chained to either of these two poles, these outer limits represent two tendencies toward which scholars may lean in their historiographic portrayals of the early church. Therefore, between these two poles lies the broad field on which historians of various confessions, presuppositions, and methodological approaches ask and answer questions on the origins of catholic Christianity.

In the wake of Harnack's developmental model of catholic Christianity as coalescing in the late second century and Bauer's thesis of later catholic orthodoxy arising from diverse and competing movements, it becomes clear that the old model of an early, distinctive, and strong sense of catholic identity has been all but replaced by an array of 'many christologies' and 'many Christianities' that preceded the rise of one orthodox christology and one catholic Christianity.

Contemporary Scholarly Tendencies

Since Harnack and Bauer, the twentieth and twenty-first century scholarly investigations of early catholic identity have taken a number of approaches to both the questions and the answers. The various presuppositions, methods, and models are rarely mutually exclusive. Rather, they overlap and intersect in many historiographical treatments of the rise of catholic Christianity. A brief illustrative survey of some of the major tendencies follows.

For many scholars, the question of Christian identity is often related specifically to Christianity's separation from Judaism, or its transformation from a Jewish messianic sect to a distinct religion with its own separate rituals, beliefs, and structures.[30] This is often associated in some form with the Hellenization of an original Jewish Christianity and a new identity based on Hellenistic changes in doctrine and practice. This has led to explorations of not only the social factors involved in such a split between two parties, but the cultural influences that would have precipitated the parting of the ways between an originally Jewish to an increasingly Gentile order.[31]

Another significant tendency is the study of conflict in establishing and maintaining religious identity.[32] R. A. Markus, for

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[30] David G. Horrell, '"Becoming Christian": Solidifying Christian Identity and Content,' in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*, ed. Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime, and Paul-André Turcotte (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 309; Norris, 'Articulating Identity,' 72–79; Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus*, Studia post-biblica, ed. David S. Katz, vol. 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 178–230.

[31] Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*, Regnum Studies in Mission (Oxford Regnum Books, 1992), 16.

[32] Horrell, 'Becoming Christian,' 313–15. See also Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 1; Kevin W. Kaatz, *Early Controversies and the Growth of Christianity*, Praeger Series on the Ancient World, ed. Bella Vivante (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012).

example, suggested that the emergence of Christian self-definition should be understood as 'born of the "crisis of identity" precipitated by the encounter between Christian and "gnostic" movements. In its essentials this phase in the crystallization of Christian self-consciousness was completed by about 200 CE." [33] He therefore explicitly downplays internal and traditional christological considerations as constituting the self-identity of early Christians. [34] Along these same lines, Virginia Burrus notes, 'It is now generally acknowledged that the second-century gnostic controversy provided the context for the earliest crystallization of a Christian orthodoxy.' [35] Keith Hopkins paints this picture in vivid hues: 'Christianity started as a tiny and embattled sect, surrounded by enemies. The perceived hostility of Jews and pagans to Christians, and the complementary hostility of Christians to their enemies, were fundamental ingredients in early Christian identity.' [36] And though Hopkins acknowledges that Christianity was a 'religion of belief,' he notes, 'Correct belief was forged in conflict with dissident insiders.' [37]

This 'model of struggle' has become a common paradigm for understanding the process of identity formation that began in the first century and continued throughout the establishment of orthodoxy and catholic Christianity. As such, methods of rhetorical criticism have displaced exegesis as a major tool for interpreting texts. Often applying a 'hermeneutic of suspicion,' many scholars have discerned motives among early Christian leaders of increasing

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[33] R. A. Markus, 'The Problem of Self-Definition: From Sect to Church,' in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E. P. Sanders, Albert I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson, vol. 1, *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 2–3.

[34] Ibid., 7.

[35] Virginia Burrus, 'Introduction,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (1996): 404. This follows a similar course as that of Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2.

[36] Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods*, 81.

[37] Ibid., 83. Also see the similar approach in Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

ecclesiastical power rather than defending inspired doctrines.[38] Hultgren summarizes the present scholarly perspective thusly:

> Our picture of early Christianity is one of many competing, disembodied voices represented in the New Testament and other early Christian literature. And … there is a widely held view that the triumph of orthodoxy was a rather late and even highhanded achievement of ecclesiastical leaders representing one strand, however diverse that strand was, who appealed to apostolic tradition to give legitimacy to their own position.[39]

However, Hultgren's response to this model of diversity and conflict should force us to return to the actual texts and ask whether it was power and personalities that were of primary interest, or whether the power struggles were themselves the effects of the clash of serious theological controversies:

> One cannot exclude from consideration the presence of struggles for power between parties and personalities in the shaping of that tradition. But the penchant for leaving the matter at that in some quarters of modern scholarship is reductionistic. The primary struggle was the struggle for the truth of the gospel (right confession of faith) and community life congruent with it. Inevitably, the normative-orthodox tradition and its alternatives had to go their separate ways.[40]

The result is that today the diversity and conflict model of early Christian origins is virtually presupposed in the relevant literature.

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[38] Frances Young notes, 'Suspicion of received accounts is characteristic of the historico-critical method. … No longer can we give an account of the Church of the Fathers as if there were from the beginning a pristine orthodoxy from which heretics diverged. Though it has sometimes sat a little uneasily with faith commitments, we owe much to modern suspicion' ('From Suspicion and Sociology to Spirituality: On Method, Hermeneutics and Appropriation with Respect to Patristic Material,' *Studia patristica* 29 [1997]: 421).

[39] Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 21.

[40] Ibid., 104.

For several scholars, though, identity is seen as an association with a particular pattern of social structures: the rites, rituals, customs, and practices of a group.[41] In the case of the early Christians, scholars may point to practices like baptism, the Eucharist, and a life that imitates Christ as external markers that helped establish a particular Christian identity, without denying confessional content as well.[42] In the final paragraph of his book, Hopkins writes,

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[41] Sociological approaches to the identity of Christianity arise from and are informed by similar studies of religion in general (ibid., 19–23). See Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Arthur D. Nock, 'The Historical Importance of Cult Associations,' *Classical Review* 38 (1924): 105–9; John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986); Joachim Walch, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944). For an extensive account of studies in the social history of early Christianity, see Lüdemann, *Primitive Christianity*, 61–81.

[42] Samuel Byrskog, 'A New Quest for the *Sitz im Leben*: Social Memory, the Jesus Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew,' *New Testament Studies* 52 (2006): 335; Martin Elze, 'Häresie und Einheit der Kirche im 2. Jahrhundert,' *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 71 (1974): 393–94; Horrell, 'Becoming Christian,' 316; Kenneth Paul Wesche, 'St Ignatius of Antioch: The Criterion of Orthodoxy and the Marks of Catholicity,' *Pro ecclesia* 3 (1994): 89–109. Koester emphasizes a unified morality as an identity-forging norm for at least some early Christian communities (Helmut Koester, 'The Apostolic Fathers and the Struggle for Christian Identity,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster [London: T. & T. Clark, 2007], 1–12). In Koester's approach, the person and work of Christ has almost no bearing on the establishment of Christian identity of at least most of Christian communities represented by the literature of the late first and early second centuries. These communities were 'not just moral and pious but also concerned with principles of love nad mutual care, hospitality and concern for the poor, widows and orphans, and ritual that would bind the communities together in common celebration' (ibid., 10–11).

> What gave Christians a sense of common identity was the hymn-singing and prayers, the moralising sermons explaining half-familiar texts, and the eucharist of bread and wine for the elect; plus, every year, the humbling initiation of new Christians through repeated exorcisms and naked baptism. … For most, *being* a Christian may have mattered even more than believing.[43]

Under the umbrella of sociological approaches to the study of early Christianity, other scholars have pointed to the early Christians' use of common ideas about race and ethnicity in establishing identity in contradistinction to other 'races' such as Jews and Greeks, often delineating various categories of ethnic identity to define Christianity as a distinct and superior 'race.'[44] Such an approach skirts issues of doctrine and belief as definitional forces, as Buell notes: 'Paying attention to ethnic reasoning helps us reconstruct the diversity among early Christian thinking and practices without recourse to problematic frameworks like orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy.'[45]

Another approach, functioning within a post-colonial interpretation of the sources, focuses on authoritative discourse as establishing early Christian identity. For example, with regard to the issue of the decline in ecstatic prophecy and the rise of catholic authority in early Christianity, Laura Nasrallah makes the following comment about the texts of Paul, Tertullian, and Epiphanius: 'While engaging in a debate about prophecy, these texts contest who has access to the divine and to divine knowledge, and who has authority to define the identity of a community.'[46] In such a view, a

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[43] Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods*, 335.

[44] See, for example, Denise Kimber Buell, 'Race and Universalism in Early Christianity,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 429–68; Aaron P. Johnson, 'Identity, Descent, and Polemic: Ethnic Argumentation in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004): 23–56.

[45] Buell, 'Race and Universalism in Early Christianity,' 468.

[46] Laura Salah Nasrallah, *'An Ecstasy of Folly': Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*, Harvard Theological Studies, ed. François Bovon,

clear and distinct Christian identity cannot be wrought apart from the hammer and anvil of authoritative text and authoritative teacher. This approach regards a fully catholic Christian identity as impossible without a broadly received canon and well established ecclesiastical offices. So, catholic Christian identity is viewed as having manifested itself only with the establishment of canon and authority at the end of the second century and into the third century. Though methodologically distinct, this model does not move much beyond Harnack's three pillars of catholic Christianity. The new trio of knowledge, power, and authority becomes an epistemological and sociological triumvirate and the actual doctrines of the early Christians are regarded as having secondary relevance. Prior to these structures and discourses Christianity would have consisted of competing and conflicting sources of authority with few common characteristics. What would eventually become 'catholic Christianity' was originally one of many traditions vying for dominance—a conclusion in keeping with Bauer's original thesis.[47]

In sum, modern contemporary approaches to the rise of catholic identity often find themselves within the field of sociology and its various models. The methodologies involved in these approaches differ sometimes dramatically from approaches that attempt to place development of catholic Christianity in the context of theological development or confessional identity, that is, in the context of orthodoxy and heresy. Indeed, any approach to the study of Christian origins in which social formation models are primary 'resists essentialisms and the static and determinative relationships between thought and practice that result from them. … Thus discourse becomes less an implicit "expression" of what society *is* and what its members *do* think, than it is a description of

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Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Peter B. Machinist, vol. 52 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5.

[47] See Birger Albert Pearson, *The Emergence of Christian Religion: Essays on Early Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 185.

or an argument for what society *should be* and what *should be* thought.'[48]

In short, a sociological approach sometimes finds itself at odds with confessional approaches to early Christian history. For example, in an article that seeks to offer an alternative to 'models of Christianization that are premised primarily on notions of ideological persuasion,' Chad Kile comments on the 'ahistorical insistence on an extrahistorical Christian essence as the motivating factor in Christian affiliation' which 'makes Christian adherence primarily a matter of ideological consent and places the burden of understanding the process of (effective) Christianization on the successful transmission of doctrinal material through persuasion at the level of ideas, concepts, and creeds.'[49] Kile thus relegates the theological content of Christianity and its role in establishing Christian identity as functions of Christian socialization rather than its primary motivation.

In light of this overview of the scholarly context, it would be easy to get lost in the jungles of contemporary methodologies and to direct attention to dismantling the theories or presuppositions that undergird these methodologies. Though this is a necessary pursuit, it is not mine. I have provided a general and perhaps overly simplified sampling of current trends in explaining identity formation in early catholic Christianity. Though these vary, they often result in the same general conclusion about the nature of early Christian history as constituted by many christologies and many Christianities. Burton Mack describes what he regards as a growing consensus of scholarship regarding the rise of Christianity:

> The picture coming into view is that of many different configurations of groups and movements that appealed to Jesus as their founder. We now refer to the Jesus schools, the Christ cults, the Pauline churches, Thomas Christianity, the

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[48] Chad Kile, 'Feeling Persuaded: Christianization as Social Formation,' in *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianity*, ed. Willi Braun, Studies in Christianity and Judaism, ed. Stephen G. Wilson, vol. 16 (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 228.

[49] Ibid., 220–21.

Johannine enclaves, Jewish-Christian communities, Gnostic-Christian groups, the Pauline school, and others as distinct and particular configurations of social experimentation in the first centuries. … Despite their common appeal to Jesus as founder, these groups are very difficult to comprehend as variants of a common persuasion or as cells within a single social network, i.e., 'the church.'[50]

THE NEED FOR THIS STUDY

As part of the ongoing scholarly discussions regarding catholic self-definition and models of unity and diversity in early Christianity, this book will focus on the role of the incarnational christological narrative as the essential, conscious, and intentional doctrinal norm of early catholic identity.[51]

The Role of Christology in Early Catholic Self-Definition

If one were to accept the common scholarly definition of catholic Christianity as a harmonious trio consisting of a discernible canon of Scripture, stable rule of faith, and authoritative episcopacy, the common date for the emergence of catholic Christianity around the end of the second century would fit the evidence.[52] The question,

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[50] Burton L. Mack, 'Many Movements, Many Myths: Redescribing the Attractions of Early Christianities,' *Religious Studies Review* 25 (1999): 133.

[51] By 'identity,' I do not mean an individual's personal sense of identity, which can and does change with the various social functions and roles of the individual. Rather, I refer to social identity, 'the identity based on belonging to a particular and defined *group*' (Horrell, 'Becoming Christian,' 312). This is a voluntary membership to a particular group 'based on commitment to beliefs and a community that shares those same beliefs' (Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 19).

[52] Jürgen Becker (*Das Urchristentum als gegliederte Epoche*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, vol. 155 [Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1993], 377) suggests the period of transition from a diverse 'primitive Christianity' to the more unified 'early church' occurred between 120 and 130 CE. Henning Paulsen ('Zur Wissenschaft vom Urchristentum und der alten Kirche—ein methodischer Versuch,' *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche*

however, is whether such a definition accurately reflects the definition of earlier catholic Christians themselves. Is it not possible that a clear sense of catholic identity existed much earlier in the second century, revolving around a different definitional standard than that assumed by many in modern scholarship?[53] I have shown that the problem of early catholic self-definition as well as the lack of an enduring model to explain both unity and diversity in the early church have led to a number of competing views and methodologies. I will therefore explore the self-definition of catholic Christians in the early second century and determine the basis for their self-identification as 'catholic.'

In this study, I present a model in which the unifying factor among 'catholic' Christians was *faithfulness to the incarnational narrative* in which the one Creator God sent His divine Son/Logos to become incarnate as a fleshly human being, who died for the sins of humanity, rose bodily from the dead, and ascended bodily to heaven.[54] I will demonstrate that the centrality of this incarnational

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Wissenschaft 68 [1977]: 210) believes the transition occurred between 150 and 180. In light of my thesis, I would propose that any such transition occurred between 70 and 90 CE. Other scholars, by applying criteria such as the rise of the bishopric or a New Testament canon as the *sine qua non* of 'the catholic church,' end up dating the rise of the early church according to anachronistic or reductionistic definitional standards.

[53] John Knox admits that 'there is something arbitrary, perhaps, in focusing this discussion of early Catholicism upon canon, creed, and ministry' (Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church*, 128).

[54] The term 'incarnational narrative' is used in a similar way in C. Stephen Evans, "The Incarnational Narrative as Myth and History," *Christian Scholar's Review* 23 (1993): 387–407; *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (Oxford: Clarendon 1996). Evans's use refers to the Christian account of Jesus of Nazareth who was more than a mere human being, but also 'the Son of God, a unique, divine person' who lived, died, and rose again (Evans, *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith*, 2). My own use includes these notions, but also emphasizes that the incarnation of the Son of God was maintained throughout all events of the narrative—the birth, life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension.

narrative unified widespread leaders and communities even amidst a great diversity of teachings, traditions, and texts.[55] Thus, the picture that emerges with such a model of early catholic identity is one of great diversity orbiting around a clear and conscious standard of definition, at least in the minds of its propagators and defenders.

Though he identifies a different gravitational center, Hultgren offers a similar picture of unity and diversity in early Christianity when he writes, 'Like the finalized canon of the New Testament, normative Christianity recognizes and preserves different expressions of Christian faith, while acknowledging that there are limits to acceptable diversity.'[56] Indeed, Hultgren notes that 'the tradition of Jesus as crucified and raised would become ascendant in the earliest communities of faith and then in normative Christianity.'[57] However, it is the emphasis on the *person* of Christ as both divine and human, spirit and flesh, that brings the uniqueness of this gospel narrative to a higher level in second century Christianity. It is this unique christological element that is lacking in many discussions of the doctrinal norms of early Christianity.

Those scholars who have advanced a central unifying force among catholic Christians often mean by this a less objective and conscious awareness of doctrinal unity. For example, immediately after the publication of Bauer's *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, Moffat responded that Bauer's thesis did not account for the 'sense of the centre' evident in early Christianity that

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[55] Crucial elements of this narrative were not only contained in early confessions, hymns, and writings, but also portrayed in the worship of the community through the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist and, I will show, even in the offices of the churches and the nature and mission of the church itself. Thus the 'incarnational christological narrative' can be portrayed by a variety of signs and symbols, not merely in words. At the same time, polemics against the incarnational christological narrative can take the form not only of attacks on the words, but also on the symbols and implications of such a christology.

[56] Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity*, 105.

[57] Ibid., 112.

formed a central unity among a number of churches.[58] Likewise, Turner held to an 'instinctive feeling' among the churches regarding the center of catholic unity rather than 'fixed and definable doctrinal norms.'[59] Wilken also speaks of a 'center,' but regards this as a later second century development, and in any case it is not seen as primarily doctrinal.[60]

In contrast to such notions of a late or loose sense of unity, I would like to re-offer just the opposite standard of catholic identity. Though certainly not an advocate of the specific thesis I will develop, Hopkins's statement regarding the relationship of the unique christology of catholic Christians to their own identity should demonstrate that the move is sufficiently tolerable for me to proceed with the investigation. He writes:

> Genetically, Christian leaders' fixation on their common beliefs arose from their extraordinary nature: Jesus was both human and divine, he suffered death to save humanity; by believing in him as the son of God, we will be saved. By both Jewish and pagan standards, this message was extraordinary. No wonder it played a crucial role in Christians' self-definition.[61]

In short, I will argue that early catholic Christians identified themselves with the incarnational christological narrative and therefore with each other in contrast with non-incarnational

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[58] James Moffatt, 'Review of *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum,*' *Expository Times* 45 (1933–34): 475–76.

[59] Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth*, 10.

[60] Wilken, 'Diversity and Unity in Early Christianity,' 110. Elsewhere he writes, 'Of course Christianity was also defined by its beliefs. … But to be baptized meant becoming part of a society within society with its own rituals and rules, governance and discipline. The office of the bishop, baptism, and the Eucharist gave shape to the community. … I single out these three at the beginning to stress that what set Christianity apart was not simply its beliefs but also the architecture of its communal life' (Robert L. Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012], 35–36).

[61] Keith Hopkins, 'Christian Number and Its Implications,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 220–21.

christologies and thus non-catholic Christian communities. Furthermore, I will show that this incarnational center of catholic identity was early, geographically widespread, and theological fundamental, suggesting that it had to have been formulated and promoted around the middle of the first century.

The Catholicity of the Incarnational Narrative

James D. G. Dunn, in his *Christology in the Making*, argues that incarnational christology was a late first century development representing one of many Jesus traditions vying for dominance among early Christians.[62] New Testament scholars in fact have identified several strata or stages in the development of christology in the first century. For example, Fuller begins with an early Palestinian christology focusing on the earthly life and teachings of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and his anticipated return. The second stratum of Hellenistic Jewish christology emphasized the sending of Jesus and his present lordship over the entire world. And the final stratum included personal pre-existence and incarnation, with the use of ontological rather than merely functional language.[63] Kysar—relying on Fuller—develops these stages in a way that seems to suggest an exclusivity for each

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[62] James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2 ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). For differing perspectives on this issue, see Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996). Many scholars agree, however, that by the end of the first century at least the 'Johannine circle' held a clear incarnational christology. See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2d edn (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 96–97; Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, 2d edn, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 26–32; T. E. Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 18–19.

[63] R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1965).

stratum, labeling the developments as 'adoptionistic,' 'agency,' and 'incarnational.'[64] In these categorizations, an adoptionistic christology portrayed a human Jesus adopted as the Son of God or Messiah because of purity or holiness, either during his earthly life or at the time of his resurrection. An agency christology saw Christ as God's human prophetic representative, endowed perhaps with unique spiritual power and divine presence, having been given the authority of God and 'sent' to function as his agent. An incarnational christology, however, emphasized the divine Son of God, or Logos, coming from heaven to become incarnate in fleshly humanity, to die, and to rise again.

Evidence for all of these christological portraits can be found in the New Testament and early Christian writings, but a common presupposition (or at least a frequent practice) among many scholars is that they be treated as mutually exclusive. There is no doubt that certain individual teachers and traditions embraced one Jesus tradition while excluding others, but we will show that an authentic incarnational christological understanding actually accommodates the various Jesus traditions under a unifying metanarrative. Thus, the catholic incarnational narrative could regard the incarnate God-man, Jesus of Nazareth, as the agent of God who was indwelled by the Holy Spirit in a special messianic anointing at his baptism, and adopted as the royal Son of God at his ascension to the Father after his resurrection from the dead. The forced distinction between functional and ontological christologies is a false one unless such a distinction is explicitly stated in the text.[65] It is only when an adoptionistic or agency christology claims to exhaust the meaning of Christ's person and work that other christological categories and descriptions are excluded. However, in any scheme that synthesizes adoptionistic, agency, and incarnational concepts, the incarnational christological narrative must by necessity serve as the metanarrative according to which other concepts are understood.[66]

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[64] See Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel*, rev. edn (Lousiville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 33–35.

[65] See Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 247–50.

[66] For more positive, though confessional, appraisals of the bibilical

Yet in the current hermeneutical and historiographical climate, many understand the documentary phenomena as evidencing independent community narratives that rule out a meaningful metanarrative. As mentioned earlier, some have posited a sometimes radically diverse array of Christianities based on competing christologies well beyond the first and into the second century.[67] This diversity is said to have led to christological conflict and the eventual dominance of incarnational christology—to the exclusion or absorption of others—by the third century CE. Irenaeus is often regarded as the clearest example of the dominance of incarnational christology in catholic Christianity.[68]

In my treatment of the rise of catholic Christianity in relation to the incarnational narrative, I will simultaneously contribute to the question of the development of incarnational christology itself by entering the first century through the back door, so to speak. By establishing the early, foundational, and widespread influence of the incarnational narrative in the second century, I will suggest that this evidences an earlier development of the paradoxical formulation of incarnational christology perhaps as early as the mid-first century.[69] In turn, this suggests a conscious identity for

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evidence, see, for example, Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist, 1994); Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

[67] Willi Braun, ed., *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities*, Studies in Christianity and Judaism, ed. Stephen G. Wilson, vol. 16 (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005); James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1977); Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*; Mack, 'Many Movements, Many Myths'; Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs—How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, but Many: The Truth about Christian Origins* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1997).

[68] Bernhard Mutschler, *Irenäus als johanneischer Theologe: Studien zur Schriftauslegung bei Irenäus von Lyon*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, ed. Christoph Markschies, vol. 21 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

[69] See conclusion, pp. 389–391.

catholic Christians centering on the incarnational narrative as early as 100 CE, not 200 as some have supposed. As one then places the collective evidence of early catholic Christianity in the second century alongside New Testament expressions of the incarnational narrative, the evidence becomes compelling for a mid-first century formulation of this christology, which places it in the climax of the apostolic period.

An Explanation of the Dual Phenomena of Unity and Diversity in Early Christianity

As I have already shown, identifying the unifying factors and diversifying forces among Christians in the second century has proven difficult. For example, Pearson argued that social and theological unity among second century Christians—though an ideal—was largely just that. Suggesting that this ideal of unity was not tied to doctrinal unity but to the authority of the bishop in both Ignatius and Irenaeus, he noted that, according to the early fathers, 'there is no real diversity in the church.'[70] He then demonstrated that the reality was quite different—that even the united church of Irenaeus was marked by great diversity.[71]

In contrast, I will argue that the early fathers of the second century were able not only to idealize, but to actualize, a catholic unity in the midst of very diverse teachings, traditions, and texts by centering on the incarnational narrative as a standard of confessional unity. Although external and institutional marks of canon, creed, and cathedra clearly developed in later decades and centuries as the sentinels of catholic orthodoxy, the catholic churches of the early second century primarily emphasized faithfulness to the incarnational narrative as the primary mark of catholic self-identity. This allowed—either intentionally or by practical default—a broad latitude within the bounds of incarnational catholicity.

These three issues therefore set the agenda and create the bounds for study: catholic identity centered on faithfulness to the

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[70] Pearson, *The Emergence of Christian Religion*, 175.

[71] Ibid., 176–78.

incarnational narrative, the universal breadth of the incarnational narrative, and the unity of catholic Christianity centered on the incarnational narrative in the midst of diverse traditions.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The thesis which I will demonstrate in the following study is that the incarnational christological narrative was already geographically widespread in the early second century and played a foundational role in the theology and paraenesis of those who identified themselves as and with 'catholic' Christians. Thus, rather than a clear catholic identity coalescing from first and second century diversity and conflict, catholic identity actually centered on the incarnational narrative at the beginning of the second century, both preceding and precipitating identity-challenging christological conflict. As such, the shared incarnational christological narrative was the center of catholic Christian identity and therefore the source of internal catholic unity amidst diversity as well as the source of external conflict with communities that rejected the incarnational narrative.

This thesis differs from both the traditional (or Eusebian) view of Christian origins as well as from non-traditional (or anti-Eusebian) perspectives. This 'traditional view' is described by Mack as a 'monolinear development of a single Christian church.'[1] Indeed, such a model is difficult to defend in light of the evidence of diversity and conflict in earliest Christianity. Thus, the 'traditional view' itself requires modification. However, an opposite tendency toward accentuated diversity of Christianities fails to

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[1] Burton L. Mack, 'Many Movements, Many Myths: Redescribing the Attractions of Early Christianities,' *Religious Studies Review* 25 (1999): 133. For a helpful review of the Eusebian view, see James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, Christianity in the Making, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 7–10.

account for powerful, early, and concrete unifying tendencies among far-flung communities of Christians who eventually identified themselves as 'catholic Christians' or 'the Great Church.'

In this light, I will propose a model of early Christian identity in which a sometimes radical diversity of teachers, traditions, and texts could maintain a 'catholic' identity in the late first and early second centuries around a clear and distinct christological narrative. In general terms this is not a revolutionary concept. As Frend notes, 'Early Christianity was not a monolithic movement but a kaleidoscope of varied traditions, beliefs, and hopes centred on the single figure of Jesus Christ.'[2] However, I will argue that the 'centering' force of catholic Christianity was not merely any notion of 'Jesus Christ,' but the Jesus Christ who was the divine Son of God, who was born, suffered, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven in the flesh—a clear and distinct 'incarnational narrative.' Therefore, although there was no monolinear development of a single catholic institution or network, there was a central focus of identity among the Christians who regarded themselves (and were regarded by others) as 'catholic,' a confessional identity which non-catholic Christians did not share.

Most modern descriptions of the unifying beliefs and practices of early catholic Christianity tend to focus on factors broader than an incarnational narrative center. Hultgren, for instance, suggests that the beginnings of a normative tradition in the middle of the first century included beliefs in the one God of Israel, the essential humanity of Jesus, redemption by his crucifixion and resurrection, the dawn of a new era of the Spirit, and a Christ-inspired love for the community.[3] In the sub-apostolic period, from 70 to 100 CE, to these previous commonalities were added the composition of ecclesiastical literature and idealization of the apostolic teachers. Yet amidst these inter-community continuities, Hultgren asserts that major differences existed in christology and christological

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[2] W. H. C. Frend, '"And I Have Other Sheep"—John 10:16,' in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honor of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 36.

[3] Arland J. Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 53.

titles.[4] Incorporating the second century, Hultgren identifies six factors that distinguished normative Christianity from other forms:

1. The God of Israel can be loved and trusted as the Creator of all that is and as benevolent to humanity.

2. Jesus of Nazareth can be trusted as the one sent by God to reveal God and to redeem humanity.

3. In spite of human failure, which would disqualify one from salvation, trust in God's redemptive work in Christ is the way to salvation, which is begun in this life, but completed beyond it.

4. The person saved by faith in God's redemptive work in Christ is expected to care about, indeed love, others and be worthy of their trust.

5. Those who trust in Jesus as revealer of God and redeemer of humanity are expected to live as disciples in a community whose ethos is congruent with the legacy of his life and teaching.

6. Those who live in communities of faith belong to a fellowship that is larger than that provided by the local community, an extended fellowship.[5]

Whereas Hultgren's approach is diachronic, tracing commonalities within a succession of periods, my own approach will be to examine one period synchronically and geographically—the late first to early second century between approximately 90 and 150. After developing a picture of the nature of catholic Christian self-identity in that period, I will then use these findings to draw historical implications for earlier periods in the first century.

To sum up, in developing the thesis of a unifying incarnational christological narrative in the second century, I will establish four things. First, I will establish a connection between the incarnational christological narrative and catholic self-identity. Primarily through an analysis of early second century writings, I will show that early catholic Christians identified themselves with other

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[4] Ibid., 78–80.

[5] Ibid., 86.

catholics on the basis of a shared incarnational christological narrative, and that ecclesiastical, social, and liturgical concerns served to defend and promote the christological center. The question to answer is this: was early catholic Christianity 'catholic' precisely because of its incarnational christology? The evidence will show that this should be answered in the affirmative.

Second, I will show that because incarnational christology formed the positive center of early catholic self-definition, the early catholic Christians used this christological center as the standard by which they distinguished between 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy'.[6] I will therefore interact with scholars who have suggested that incarnational christology as well as catholic self-identity developed in reaction to christological diversity and social conflict in the first and second centuries and that the early distinction between orthodoxy and heresy was either 'soft' or muddled. As catholic identity encountered competing social or ecclesiastical communities, their infant incarnational narrative continued to be refined throughout the second and third centuries, but the distinction between 'orthodox' and 'heretical' or between 'catholic' and 'non-catholic' was determined primarily based on traditional christological considerations.

Third, I will show that it was in light of a traditional and authoritative incarnational narrative that catholic writers interpreted both texts and worldviews, so that an incarnational hermeneutic was applied in catholic communities while non-catholic groups applied a distinctly non-incarnational or even anti-incarnational hermeneutic to the same texts and traditions. Therefore, the basis of incarnational christology was not primarily reflective exegesis of authoritative texts, but a received incarnational tradition within the early catholic communities.

Finally, I will suggest that the early, foundational, and widespread establishment of incarnational christology supports the

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[6] Depending on how one understands the situation of the first two hundred years of Christian history, the labels 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' are variously used. Though their use sometimes presupposes the truth of a particular theology and the falsehood of another, when I use these terms, I will do so from the perspective of particular ancient writers.

second century tradition that apostolic leaders with perceived authority exercised influence over the theology and thought of early catholic communities into the late first century.[7] Their disciples, then, exercised relative authority in the early second century. Thus, doctrinal authority in early catholic communities primarily centered on the teachings of individuals and communities rather than texts, and texts had similar authority only when written or received by these individuals or communities and interpreted in conformity with their incarnational theology.[8]

My method of establishing the elements of my thesis will be to carry on a dialogue with the ancient texts—that is, to pose a variety of questions to the primary documents available to us from the early second century and slightly beyond.[9] These questions will

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[7] Contra Conzelmann, who has argued that the idea of the authoritative 'twelve apostles' developed 'in the "post-apostolic age"' and had 'no concrete influence on the theology and the form of the church generally. They are influential only as an idea' (Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden [New York: Harper and Row, 1969], 290–91).

[8] Though this sounds close to the critical assertion that in the period of early Christianity 'there was already Christian faith and a Christian church before a New Testament text' (Gerd Lüdemann, *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity*, trans. John Bowden [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 1), I am asserting that in the absence of a universally received and stable collection of apostolic and prophetic New Testament books, the early catholic communities still had authoritative doctrinal norms.

[9] One danger in asking questions of these various documents is that the enthusiastic interrogator will ask questions that the documents do not answer. Unsatisfied with silence, the interrogator might extract a coerced confession. Yet the alternative to the impossibility of a purely objective investigation is a subjective investigation conducted in a community of scholarly accountability. For background literature on hermeneutics that have influenced my perspective on understanding, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garret Barden and William G. Doerpel (New York: Seabury, 1975) and Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

address three major issues: the status of the incarnational narrative, the notion of catholic self-identity, and the standard of inter-ecclesiastical unity. These questions, however, bring up a number of preliminary methodological issues.

THE PRIMARY SOURCES

Most of the work of this study will be done in the available primary sources, with preference given to those non-canonical sources from the late first and early second centuries, to about 150 CE. However, I am conscious of the fact that scholars have available for study only those documents that were regarded by later Christians as worthy of preservation. Naturally, later doctrinal biases would play a role in the preservation of these texts.[10] Therefore, the extant works may reflect the interests of later 'catholic' Christianity simply because the works from the same period that represented other forms of Christianity were not preserved.

We must remember, though, that even among writers regarded by later catholic Christians as 'orthodox,' we have only a representation of their entire collections of writings. This is not because some of the writings of particular authors were selected and the others rejected, for we know that later fathers actually quoted from or referred to then-extant writings favorably. The simple fact is that some of these were not copied frequently enough and were lost. One author notes:

> The written sources on which we must base our understanding of second century Christianity are very few, and for the most part these deal with very particular matters and were not written with an eye to the broad questions of later historians. We have a piece from Rome from the end of the first century, a few letters from Antioch from a bit later, and a scattering of

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[10] However, this is not always the rule, as many documents regarded as non-orthodox were copied or extensively quoted for the purpose of refutation, which led to their preservation.

> documents written we are not altogether sure where, why, or when.[11]

This estimation sounds rather bleak, but I believe the reality is much more promising. For the documents available from the early second century are of such a character that their contents may still be analyzed with a view toward discerning the state of 'catholic' Christianity during this period. These are not just documents written in Rome and Antioch, but often correspondences that provide evidence for the extent and nature of existing personal and geographical relationships between people and communities—relationships that indicate the extent of unity and diversity among these groups and evidence a particular center of shared catholic identity. It is in this historical light that these documents must be read. The order and nature of this historical exposition will be seen in the 'Overview' section below.

Though I am confident that I can demonstrate the usefulness of the extant documents of the earliest generations of Christians to answer questions about the nature of early catholic Christianity, I admit that with the exception of the Nag Hammadi Codexes and the recent *Gospel of Judas*, very few new documents have been found in the last century that help paint a clearer picture of the early second century than had been sketched before. The sources—at least for what was later regarded as 'catholic' Christianity—have not changed significantly. Yet the historiographical approaches to these documents have shifted in the last century, as indicated in chapter 1.

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[11] James F. McCue, 'The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era: 1, The Beginnings Through Nicaea, 2, From Nicaea to Leo the Great,' in *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, ed. Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, vol. 5 (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), 45–46.

Figure 3: Non-canonical catholic Christian sources of the early second cntury plotted according to approximate dates of composition and likely geographical provenance.
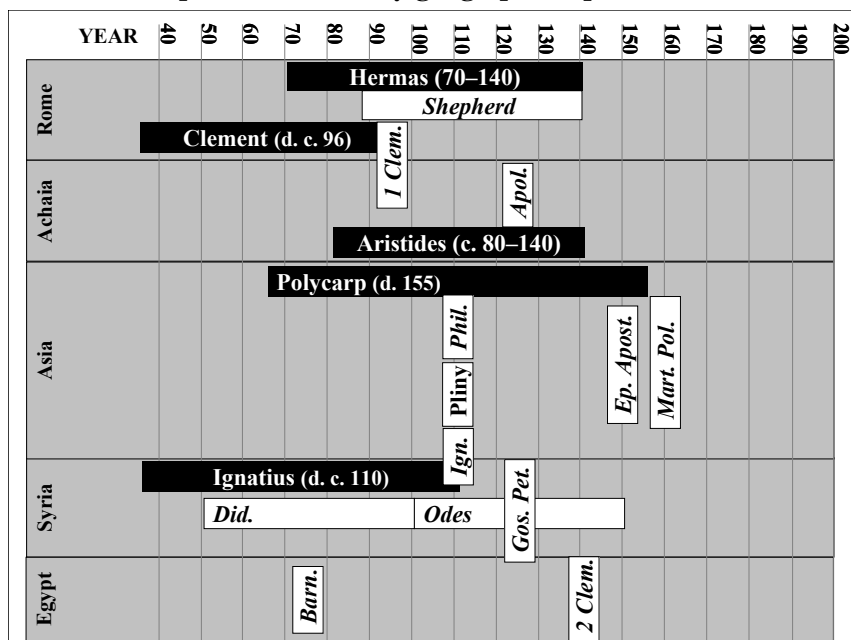
RETURNING TO THE SOURCES

Through a careful, focused examination of each primary source, I will determine what part—if any—the incarnational narrative played in the author's argument, theology, and thought. This of course involves answering the question of whether the elements of the incarnational narrative are even present in the text, or if some other christology or narrative is found therein. If the distinctive elements of the narrative are either explicit or implicit in the text, then the investigation may explore the place of this incarnational christology in the thought and theology of the document as a whole. Does it play a central and organizational role? Or does the incarnational doctrine cower in the margins?

Another realm of inquiry which I will pose to the primary documents will be to determine how the writing addresses the question of Christian self-identity. Is there a central definitional

narrative or structure? How does the author or community that stands behind the text conceive of Christian identity vis-à-vis competing communities? And how does this relate to the question of the place of the unique incarnational narrative?

A third set of questions I will explore involves how the writer or community represented by the text perceived the relationship with other leaders and communities outside their own. Does it either explicitly or implicitly point to a unifying standard of identity—a 'catholicity'? If so, does this relate to the established incarnational narrative? What effect did the 'almost obsessional mutual interest and interchange' between certain Christian communities have on the preservation or establishment of catholic self-identity?[12]

Ultimately, however, it is my opinion as a twenty-first century scholar affected as I am by contemporary discussions on hermeneutics in a postmodern context,[13] that the evaluation and interpretation of the extant documentary evidence plays a significant but not determinative role in the views of scholars regarding unity and diversity in early Christianity. Presuppositions often mold the valuation (and not simply the evaluation) of evidences, the methods of interpretation, and even the types of conclusions that will be regarded as scientifically, philosophically, or historically acceptable. Hermeneutics, historiography,

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[12] Rowan Williams writes that non-gnostic churches of the second century presents us with an enormous amount of evidence for what can sometimes seem like an 'almost obsessional mutual interest and interchange' (Rowan Williams, 'Does It Make Sense to Speak of Pre-Nicene Orthodoxy?,' in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honor of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 11).

[13] On the problems identified and created by post-modern approaches to hermeneutics, and a hopeful perspective, see Frances Young, 'From Suspicion and Sociology to Spirituality: On Method, Hermeneutics and Appropriation with Respect to Patristic Material,' *Studia patristica* 29 (1997): 421–35.

worldview, theology, and even economics and politics all play their roles in how individual scholars handle the same evidences.[14]

For some, these presuppositions are non-negotiable (or at least stubborn) obstacles to objective appraisal, analysis, and interpretation.[15] Scholarship must therefore employ the lever of evidence from primary sources, applying a careful analysis of texts in their most likely historical contexts in ways that are verifiable among diverse and even conflicting schools of historiography and hermeneutics. It seems the only approach that will satisfy this demand is to read texts in a way that strives to allow the authors themselves to express their ideas, definitions, emphases, biases, presuppositions, and theologies in their own words. Thus, prooftexting, synthesizing, surveying, or systematizing across authors cannot be employed uncritically, as this method presupposes that which is in question—an inherent inter-textual unity. However, neither can the opposite be allowed—a critical approach that presupposes radical diversity and conflict prior to

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[14] See William Everett Ferguson, ed., *Doctrinal Diversity: Varieties of Early Christianity*, Recent Studies in Early Christianity, vol. 4 (New York: Garland, 1999); Robert A. Kraft, 'In Search of "Jewish Christianity" and its "Theology": Problems of Definition and Methodology,' in *Early Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Everett Ferguson, Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays, ed. Everett Ferguson, David M. Scholer, and Paul Corby Finney, vol. 6 (New York: Garland, 1993), 1–12; Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1978); Frederik Wisse, 'The Use of Early Christian Literature as Evidence for Inner Diversity and Conflict,' in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, ed. Charles W. Hendrick and Robert Hodgson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 177–90.

[15] Thomas O'Loughlin notes, 'If investigators approach the evidence with one set of assumptions and questions they get one set of answers and one image of the early church, but if they approach the past from a different angle and attitude to the sources of information, then the emerging picture will be totally different' ('The Early Church,' in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World: A Survey of Recent Scholarship*, ed. Dan Sherbok-Cohn and John M. Court [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 124).

exegetical analysis. Each ancient author must therefore be allowed to speak. And language must be seen as a vehicle for ideas—in this case, theological ideas. Unfortunately, the result of my expositional method is a sometimes tedious detailed examination of each individual text, but anything less would necessarily render unrestrained subjective results.

The presuppositions in the study of early Christianity are numerous for so many reasons. While very few scholars would dare to argue that diversity did not exist in early Christianity, the degree of diversity is a perennial question. The real issue, though, is whether diversity necessarily meant disunity and conflict. And even this question is difficult. Did conflict imply schism and 'heresy'? Is it possible that later catholic communities put up with far less diversity than earlier catholic communities, while at the same time earlier communities had a more conscious and better-communicated sense of the unifying aspects of their beliefs and practices?

Also, scholars often speak about the diversity within early Christianity, the opposing forces in the early church, and so forth, without clearly defining these categories. We cannot assume that an author of a particular ancient writing ever regarded himself or herself as part of the church or as part of Christianity, and we must take care that we do not anachronistically define these terms either too narrowly or too broadly. Only a careful examination of the uses of these terms and concepts in the early second century literature will help establish more accurate categories—if, indeed, they existed.

PRESUPPOSITIONAL PROBLEMS: HISTORIOGRAPHY OR HAGIOGRAPHY?

In his critique of Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity*, Mack notes, 'The tendency has been to read our texts as historical documents, taking their constructions at face value, and fitting together all the reports in support of the canonical sketch of Christian origins.'[16] Mack's alternative is a more 'objective' hermeneutic of suspicion, in

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[16] Mack, 'Many Movements, Many Myths,' 134.

which the texts are read as 'arguments, accounts, and rhetorical persuasions composed at particular times as self-serving constructions of their present situations and invented construals of the past.'[17] Fair enough, but one must take care here. Unrestrained suspicion is no less virtuous than unbridled naiveté; neither distortion should be donned with the mantel of 'objectivity.' Each approach is burdened by its own set of conscious or unconscious prejudices and presuppositions.

With an awareness of these two tendencies, my own method of reading these texts begins with an exegetical analysis and exposition of the primary texts, closely examining their context, arguments, and tone. This does not necessarily presuppose that a particular text's construal of reality actually corresponds to reality. Thus, when Ignatius of Antioch described what it meant to be 'catholic,' we can of course assume that Ignatius himself propounded this view of catholicity. However, without some means of validation, we cannot assume that this was the common understanding among his recipients. This is why my method of historical investigation must move beyond a single text for validation, especially in key places in the argument. I must, so to speak, doubt my own exposition and understanding and, to a certain reasonable degree, grant the benefit of the doubt to those who would challenge my evidence and arguments. So, as I examine the reception of various teachers, traditions, and texts, I will test whether the ideas of the individual authors were received in such a way that the reception validated the author's construal of reality. Therefore, my method cannot be strictly exegetical, but synthetic; it must be both diachronic and synchronic in its analysis of the relationship between various teachers, traditions, and texts. Taken together, this will either validate or correct the claims of various documents.

Yet in this hermeneutical and historiographical approach, I seek to avoid an all-too-common habit among scholars of Christian origins. Many seek to distance themselves from the historical theological issues addressed in the primary sources and to follow the trend—illustrated above by Mack—to all but banish theology

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[17] Ibid.

and faith from scholarly discussions on Christian origins. By treating the history of Christianity as an object of sociological inquiry (which in itself is necessary and helpful), the theological and ideological questions that so concerned the original authors and audiences of the historical documents are in danger of being absorbed by sociological, psychological, political, or cultural theories and explanations.[18] I suspect that the unintentional result will sometimes be an anachronistically secular reading of originally sacred sources.

Historians, sociologists, and philologists, in a commendable attempt to avoid theological and confessional judgments, often seek to apply an 'objective' scientific methodology. However, such attempts run the risk of failing to grasp the deeper emotional, motivational, and existential power of theological concerns contained in the very documents they are seeking to objectively interpret. Thus, the theology of the fathers seems to be read as merely the functional trappings of religion—the accidents of a sociological essence rather than the 'thing' itself. By severing one's own modern theological interests and passions, the historian also runs the risk of separating out those theological interests of the texts being studied. Scholars, therefore, are more likely to find non-theological interests and motivations underlying theological treatises (especially polemical ones) than primarily doctrinal and ethical interests and motivations. Just as confessional investigations are always in danger of reading into ancient Christian texts a later and more nuanced theological understanding, non-confessional scholars (and sometimes anti-confessional critics) risk excising the underlying theological language and thought from the documents. In this regard, Jarslav Pelikan observes:

> To a degree that is alarming for their historical expertise (what it may or may not mean for their existential situation), historians have lost the ability to resonate to the religious convictions of previous ages, which they therefore feel obliged

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[18] See, for example, the methodological discussion in Birger Albert Pearson, *The Emergence of Christian Religion: Essays on Early Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 215–18.

> to explain away in terms of political, economic, or psychological factors. … No theory of historiography dare be so antiseptic in its definition of scholarly objectivity that it rules out the possibility of an existential reaction to the message announced in the sources.[19]

As a historical theologian who is sensitive to the identity-forging power of theological thoughts and emotions, and who is aware of the reality of doctrinal development throughout the early centuries of the church, I am more likely to see in the writings of the early fathers an earnest motive to present, promote, and protect what they viewed as essential theological and ethical truths, not merely ecclesiastical structures or personal agendas (though the latter could certainly also play a role).[20] I know that to some scholars such a reading reeks of idealism and romanticism—a by-gone view of the early church that, contra Mack, regarded the fathers as genuinely concerned about preserving the truth rather than promoting their own power. It is one thing to say they were mistaken about the past they claimed to be preserving; it is another to say they invented a past to promote a more promising future.

Though I am less inclined to regard the sources as 'guilty' until proven innocent than some critical scholars, neither do I want to fall into the snare of a naïve confessionalism. However, it is not simply an uncritical confessionalism, but a hermeneutical decision that leads a scholar to accept the sincerity of the sources while acknowledging the inevitable fallibility and limitations of the same sources. Yet a confessional approach to the sources balanced by a critical eye can bring an important dimension to historical scholarship. Though a historian need not embrace the theological claims of the ancient fathers to take them seriously, she must at least try to understand them. Regarding such a confessional-critical reading, Frances Young notes: 'This empathy [with the text] will be enhanced by Christian faith, for there is continuity at some level

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[19] Jarolsav Pelikan, *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* (New York: Corpus, 1971), 80, 81.

[20] See Pelikan's definition of the task of the historical theologian in *Historical Theology*, xxiii.

between modern believers and Christians of the past; the hermeneutical gap is not absolute but bridgeable. Beyond the purging fires of criticism may lie a new naivety.'[21]

Yet it seems that fewer and fewer methodological approaches to the history of early Christianity grasp the real power of religious thoughts and emotions as identity-forming catalysts. In this limited way, at least, the confessional historian may have an advantage over the non-confessional scholar if one understands the hermeneutical concept of *Verstehen* in broader terms than simply the cognition of data.

Therefore, my overall methodological goal as an historical theologian is to strike a balance between two tendencies. First, I want to avoid the excesses of non-confessional methodologies that commendably steer clear of theological anachronism while nevertheless projecting postmodern, post-colonial, and post-Christian conflicts into the virtual arena of the ancient church. On the other hand, I want to avoid the confessional historiography that sails into the dangerous waters of a non-critical hagiography, fighting contemporary theological and ecclesiastical wars on the battlefield of the second century. Thus, I regard my own methodology as an exegetical-expositional approach conducted within a confessional-critical framework.[22]

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[21] Frances Young, 'Retrospect: Interpretation and Appropriation,' in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 488.

[22] See Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2013), 2, 5, 18–23. Frances Young notes, 'There are of course many different individuals and groups who read this literature for different reasons and with different outcomes; for there is no "innocent" reading of these texts, and there are different "informed" readings. Some of us inhabit a variety of different interpretative communities, reading the texts as scholars, as women, as believers, oscillating in our reading stance between different perspectives, sharing interests with different groups. But one significant "we" must be those of us who belong to Christian communities which have both continuity and discontinuity with the past

OVERVIEW

In chapters three through nine, I will begin building my case by closely examining the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, whose letters help initially to establish the content, extent, and potency of an early incarnational christological narrative primarily in Antioch and Asia Minor. I will show that Ignatius's writings provide evidence that his incarnational narrative formed the center of catholic Christian identity in Syria, Asia Minor, and Rome. This evidence begins to suggest that the incarnational narrative as the unifying center of catholic identity was early, foundational, and widespread.

In chapters ten through fifteen, I will use the pattern of Ignatius's incarnational narrative to examine other early Christian writings of the second century, demonstrating that the evidence from the Ignatian corpus is not isolated but complemented and strengthened by writings throughout the Christian world from approximately the same period. This will further demonstrate the thesis that early catholic Christianity's self-identity revolved around the centrality of the incarnational narrative. Because catholicity in its original sense meant an inter-community universality, I will treat this analysis regionally to the extent possible.

In chapters sixteen through nineteen, I will test the thesis of the distinctly incarnational identity of catholic Christianity by surveying the christologies of a wide spectrum of non-catholic writings, demonstrating that the non-incarnational or anti-incarnational christologies which they advanced were most often secondary and polemical in nature. This will be evident as I compare the similarities between these writings and catholic literature with regard to language and practice. In these chapters, I will propose that catholic Christians employed an 'incarnational hermeneutic' to texts and traditions while non-catholics distinguished themselves from catholic Christians by employing a non-incarnational hermeneutic.

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community which produced this literature' (Young, 'Retrospect,' 492). My unique contribution to this ongoing dialogue is that I read these texts differently, bringing a new perspective to a broad community of perspectives.

In a short final chapter, I will summarize my argument, demonstrating that the incarnational christological narrative of early catholic Christianity was foundational and widespread in the early second century. In short, second century incarnational christology *was* early catholic Christianity, and non-incarnational christologies were thus excluded as non-catholic.

Quid sit christianum esse?

By relying on modern (or postmodern) literary theories, historiographies, theories of social conflict, and post-colonial deconstructionism, many historians today often answer the question of early Christian identity by focusing on ancient writers' religious, social, cultural, and political motivations rather than on theological content and ethical concerns. Twentieth and twenty-first century historians operating in light of the theories and historical models of scholars like Harnack and Bauer often presuppose or promote theories that see 'catholic Christianity' as having a derived and evolved identity dependent on conflict with other social, religious, and cultural institutions and ideologies. So, 'heresy' is not only defined by 'orthodoxy,' but 'orthodoxy' itself is delimited by 'heresy.' The primary factors in the complex development of these concepts are therefore seen as rooted in cultural contexts and social conflicts.

However, it can be argued that the early catholic Christians at the beginning of the second century shared an identity centered in a common incarnational narrative, the content of which became the source of conflict with the surrounding culture and the bounds within which catholic identity was established vis-à-vis Christian 'heresies.' One does not have to accept the christological truth claims of early Christians to argue that these claims were unique and that their norming function in the early catholic communities was stable. That is, if the truth claims themselves were the essential defining element of the allied community of communities, and if this definition was early and strong among numerous local communities over a widespread geographical area, then the shared incarnational christological narrative was the center of catholic Christian identity and therefore the source of internal catholic unity amidst diversity as well as the source of external conflict with communities that rejected the incarnational narrative.

CHAPTER 3. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH: WRITINGS AND THEOLOGY

In *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch* (2001), Charles Brown seeks 'to isolate and examine the Ignatian concept of the εὐαγγέλιον within its environment … to delineate the boundaries of Christian belief and practice.'[1] Brown explicitly focuses on the term 'gospel' in Ignatius, as well as the common motifs of coming, cross, death, suffering, and resurrection.[2] He concludes that for Ignatius, the 'gospel' was primarily an oral message that centered on the suffering (including the cross and death) and resurrection of Christ—in continuity with Paul's 'gospel,' but existing in a more fixed form. Brown then explores the function of Ignatius's 'gospel' as setting down the boundaries of what was correct belief and practice.[3] In his conclusion he notes:

> Ignatius' expressions of the incarnation—in conjunction with the εὐαγγέλιον—serve a group-defining function in Ignatian Christianity. Thus, Jesus is '*our* God' (i.e., *Eph.* 18.2; *Rom.* insc.). This group-defining function is also behind Ignatius' references to Jesus' unity of flesh and spirit (e.g., *Eph.* 7.2; *Smyrn.* 3.2) as a particular way of describing the incarnation. This unity is a model for the Christian living in the world (*Eph.* 8.2), as well as the image of church unity (*Smyrn.* 3.1–4.1). Finally, the Christological epithets 'the new human' (*Eph.* 20.1)

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[1] Charles Thomas Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, Studies in Biblical Literature, vol. 12 (New York: Lang, 2000), 205.

[2] Ibid., 15–51.

[3] Ibid., 207.

and 'the perfect human' (*Smyrn.* 4.2) ultimately refer to the incarnation as the exemplar of Christian unity.[4]

The thesis I will develop in the following pages both acknowledges Brown's work and takes it further, not merely in the basic arguments and evidences regarding the function of Ignatius's 'gospel' as establishing self-definitional boundaries between 'catholic' and 'non-catholic' groups, but in pursuing the historical implications of this conclusion. The implications of Ignatius's christocentric thought have not been fully pressed to help answer historical questions regarding the status of the incarnational narrative in early Christianity. By establishing that Ignatius's christology was marked by a distinct incarnational center that permeated his thought, one may use Ignatius's seven letters as a window to peer into other regions where Christianity had spread by the beginning of the second century, including Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Rome. Thus, through Ignatius's letters we begin to see not only the geographical extent of the incarnational narrative in the early second century, but also the basis of catholic identity, unity, and self-definition beyond the narrow provincial purview of Ignatius himself.[5]

A few notes concerning my terminology are necessary. Whereas Brown focused on the term 'gospel,' especially as understood and applied by Ignatius, I have adopted the term 'incarnational narrative.' As mentioned in previous chapters, this term focuses on the narratival background of Ignatius's 'gospel' as described by Brown, but can be used more flexibly to describe the variations of this narrative among other catholic as well as non-catholic writers. It seems to me that the term 'gospel' itself carries with it too many ambiguities and can be confused with written texts that bear that name, as well as with specific evangelistic presentations of a soteriological message.

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[4] Ibid., 208.

[5] Contra Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 70.

I will also repeatedly use the term 'catholic' as an adjective referring to a network of teachers, traditions, churches, and texts that center on a shared Christian identity.[6] My intended application of 'catholic' employs the term as first used by Ignatius himself in reference to 'a general sense of a common unity among local churches centered on proper faith in Jesus,'[7] the meaning of which is actually part of the thesis I seek to demonstrate. Along with other self-designations such as 'Christian' or 'Christianity,' the term 'catholic' in Ignatius carried a connotation of self-identity extending beyond the boundaries of the Antiochene church and the immediate reach of Syrian Christianity. And although the specific term was not yet used by other writers of Ignatius's generation in any of the extant texts from that period, I will employ the term to describe this same general sense of inter-ecclesial unity found in other writings. I will contend that for Ignatius, the proper catholic faith centered on the incarnational narrative.

Building on the work of Brown and others, I will begin by describing the integral aspects of the incarnational narrative as Ignatius saw them (that is, his 'gospel'), then examine each letter

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[6] Harnack wrote, 'If by "Catholic" we mean the church of doctrine and of law, then the Catholic Church had its origin in the struggle with Gnosticism' (Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders, 2d rev. edn [New York: Putnam's Sons, 1903], 222–23). And Trevett notes, 'Such early Catholicism has been associated in scholars' minds with the de-eschatologizing of Christianity, with growing distinctions between clergy and laity, with continuing institutionalization which associated the churches with hierarchies of officials and with sacramentalism' (Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 29 [Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1992], 152). These do not, I believe, accurately reflect the sense of 'catholic' according to Ignatius and others who originally employed the term in a less formal and more focused sense. Hultgren calls this 'normative Christianity,' or a Christianity 'that has no specific name but is usually called "orthodoxy," "catholic" Christianity, or sometimes "ecclesiastical" Christianity' (Arland J. Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 84).

[7] Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 176.

individually to highlight the ways this gospel functioned in his exhortations to his readers. In this way, I will demonstrate that in Ignatius's mind the incarnational narrative was expected to have been so firmly established among the catholic communities that he felt he could appeal to its tenets as axiomatic presuppositions from which he could draw persuasive conclusions. My exploration of the Ignatian letters will thus focus on hints and indications of the reception of Ignatius and his incarnational narrative across a broad geographical expanse, setting the stage for a direct examination of the testimony from these regions in chapter three.

THE WRITINGS OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Despite periodic attempts to dethrone the consensus regarding the authenticity and date of the seven letters of Ignatius, the great majority of scholars concur with the basic conclusions established by Lightfoot and Zahn that Ignatius of Antioch wrote the letters to Ephesus, Tralles, Magnesia, Rome, Smyrna, Philadelphia, and Polycarp around 110 CE.[8] Considering the stability of the consensus and the broader purposes of this study, I see no pressing need to defend the consensus against the arguments of detractors.[9]

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[8] Though I have settled on an approximate date of 110 CE, it may be that Ignatius's letters were written between the years 98 and 117 (Trajan's reign). For an overview of scholarship, see William R. Schoedel, 'Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 285–349. Though this approximate date enjoys widespread support, it is not without challenges or uncertainties (see Paul Foster, 'The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster [London: T. & T. Clark, 2007], 84–89)

[9] I do not feel justified in consuming space in this book to recount the history of Ignatian scholarship that arrived at the consensus. Others have already done this repeatedly and well. See especially Albert Osger Mellink, *Death as Eschaton: A Study of Ignatius of Antioch's Desire for Death* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2000), 5–50. For the earliest articulations of the consensus on Ignatian authenticity and date, see Adolf von Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, 2 vols.,

Geschichte der altchristlichen Litterature, Part II (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897–1904); Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1889); Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873). For several challenges to the consensus see H. Delafosse, 'Nouvel examen des lettres d'Ignace d'Antioche,' *Revue d'histoire et de littéraire religieuse* 8 (1922): 477–533; Josep Rius-Camps, *The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius, the Martyr: A Critical Study Based on the Anomalies Contained in the Textus Receptus*, trans. Kathleen England, Christianismos, vol. 2 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1979); Daniel Völter, *Die ignatianischen Briefe auf ihren Ursprung untersucht* (Tübingen: Heckenhauer, 1892); Reinoud Weijenborg, 'Is Evagrius Ponticus the Author of the Longer Recension of the Ignatian Letters?,' *Antonianum* 44 (1969): 339–47; Reinoud Weijenborg, *Les lettres d'Ignace d'Antioche, étude de critique littéraire et de théologie*, trans. Barthélemy Héroux (Leiden: Brill, 1969). Challengers generally build their arguments on alleged anachronisms (e.g., Χριστιανισμός or καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία), apparently over-developed theology or thought (monepiscopacy, high christology, or anti-Valentinian polemics) or even certain allusions to later second century writings like *Shepherd of Hermas* or *4 Maccabees*. Lechner, building upon and advancing earlier arguments of Joly, argued that the Ignatian letters argued against Valentinian Gnosticism (see Robert Joly, *Le dossier d'Ignace d'Antioche*, Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, vol. 69 [Brussel: Éditions de l'université de Bruxelles, 1979]; Thomas Lechner, *Ignatius adversus Valentinianos?: Chronologische und theologiegeschichtliche Studien zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, vol. 47 [Leiden: Brill, 1999]). Thus far, these arguments have not succeeded at persuading most patristic scholars, likely owing to their subtlety, complexity, or dependency on particular interpretations of the Ignatian letters themselves, e.g., the nature of the Ignatius's episcopacy, his particular concept of 'catholic' Christianity, or the precise identification of his opponents. Not surprisingly, supporters of the consensus are too numerous and obvious to catalogue, but some of the most recent examples of scholars who maintain authenticity include Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy* (New York: Continuum, T. & T. Clark, 2007); Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, *1 Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache*, Loeb Classical Library, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Franz Xaver

I shall therefore proceed with the common conclusion that, except for minor textual variants, the shorter Greek recension of the Ignatian corpus is authentic.

I begin this study with the writings of Ignatius of Antioch for several reasons. First, I will show that Ignatius's theology clearly reflects an incarnational narrative—that the divine Son of God took on humanity through the virgin birth, suffered, died, and rose again—all in true human flesh. Second, because Ignatius's letters touch on such diverse topics as scripture, church order, heresy, theology proper, and ethics, I can analyze the place of the incarnational narrative in relation to these ideas, demonstrating that for Ignatius the incarnation was central and foundational for his doctrinal formulation and paraenesis. Third, through both the composition and reception of Ignatius and his writings, I will begin to establish the status of the incarnational narrative over a broad geographical expanse—from Syria, through Asia Minor, to Macedonia and to Rome. Fourth, due to the commonly accepted date of Ignatius's letters (about 110 CE), I can establish the

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Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); Kenneth J. Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna: A New Translation and Commentary*, rev. and exp. edn (Zanesville, OH: CHResources, 2009), 2–3; Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Kari Syreeni, vol. 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004); Henning Paulsen, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 2. neubearbeitete ed., vol. 2, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 4; Paul R. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe, vol. 166 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 631–32; Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*. Also see John-Paul Lotz, *Ignatius and Concord: The Background and Use of the Language of Concord in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Patristic Studies, vol. 8, ed. Gerald Bray (New York: Lang, 2007). Lotz argues that Ignatius's use of ὁμόνοια fits best in the 'literary, iconographic and rhetorical trends that were normative between the 80s and the 130s AD' (Lotz, *Ignatius and Concord*, 12, 195).

worldwide status of the incarnational narrative and its relationship to catholic Christianity very early in the second century.

THE THEOLOGY OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Largely due to the early date of his life and the impact of his writings on the interpretation of first century Christianity and its documents, Ignatius has often been conscripted to serve in various theological or scholarly conflicts. Finding Ignatius on one's side of a debate was always a boon, mostly because he was presumed to have held a historical position either overlapping or adjacent to the apostles. As such, students of the New Testament have been interested in what, if any, New Testament writings were known by Ignatius.[10] Churchmen debated the nature of Ignatius's ecclesiology—whether his form of episcopacy was a new and

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[10] See, for example, Walter J. Burghardt, 'Did St. Ignatius of Antioch Know the Fourth Gospel? Part 1,' *Theological Studies* 1 (1940): 1–26; Paul Foster, 'The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,' in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 159–86; Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, ed. Robert M. Grant (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 56–64; Charles E. Hill, 'Ignatius and the Apostolate: The Witness of Ignatius to the Emergence of Christian Scripture,' *Studia patristica* 36 (2001): 226–48; Helmut Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vätern*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, vol. 65 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957); Christian Maurer, *Ignatius von Antiochien und das Johannesevangelium*, Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments, vol. 18 (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1949); H. Nordberg, 'On the Bible Text of St. Ignatius of Antioch,' *Arctos* 3 (1962): 119–41; Heinrich Rathke, *Ignatius von Antiochien und die Paulusbriefe*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, vol. 99 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1967); William R. Schoedel, 'Ignatius and the Reception of the Gospel of Matthew in Antioch,' in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 235–70.

limited development or a long-established order.[11] The nature of the sacraments in Ignatius has been another attraction for theological and practical inquiry.[12] And in the last hundred years, his writings have been the focus of several studies attempting to advance or rebut accounts of the history of orthodoxy and heresy, the history of religious thought, and the rise of catholic Christianity.[13] In short, to almost every historian of early Christianity, Ignatius's theology and thought matter.

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[11] See Charles Chauncy, *The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination Asserted and Maintained* (Boston, MA: Draper & Leverett, 1762); Henry Hammond and Richard Royston, *An Answer to the Animadversions on the Dissertations Touching Ignatius's Epistles, and the Episcopacie in Them Asserted* (London: J.G., 1654); William Jameson, *The Fundamentals of the Hierarchy Examined and Disproved* (Glasgow: Robert Sanders, 1697); Jean Réville, *Études sur les origines de l'épiscopat: la valeur du témoignage d'Ignace d'Antioche*, Revue de l'histoire des religions, vol. 22 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1891); Judy Schindler, 'The Rise of One-Bishop-Rule in the Early Church: A Study in the Writings of Ignatius and Cyprian,' *Baptist Reformation Review* 10, no. 2 (1981): 3–9; John D. Zizioulas, 'Épiskopè et épiskopos dans l'église primitive: bref inventaire de la documentation,' *Irénikon* 56 (1983): 484–502.

[12] Theodor Dreher, *Die Zeugnisse des Ignatius, Justinus und Irenaeus über die Eucharistie als Sakrament* (Sigmaringen: Liehner, 1871); Daniel Hoffman, 'Ignatius and Early Anti-Docetic Realism in the Eucharist,' *Fides et historia* 30 (1998): 78–88; Raymond Johanny, 'L'Eucharistie, sacrement de l'unité selon S. Ignace d'Antioche,' *Parole & Pain* 18 (1967): 40–56; Maurice Jourjon, 'La présidence de l'eucharistie chez Ignace d'Antioche,' *Lumière et Vie* 16, no. 84 (1967): 26–32; G. Saber, 'La conception baptismale de S. Ignace d'Antioche,' *Melto* 5 (1970): 177–96; J. A. Woodhall, 'The Eucharistic Theology of Ignatius of Antioch,' *Communio* 5 (1972): 5–21.

[13] On orthodoxy and heresy, see Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, Beitrage zur historischen Theologie, vol. 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1934); Frederick W. Norris, 'Ignatius, Polycarp, and I Clement: Walter Bauer Reconsidered,' *Vigiliae christianae* 30 (1976): 23–44; Thomas A. Robinson, *The Bauer Thesis Examined: The Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 11 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1988); Paul R. Trebilco, 'Christian Communities in Western Asia Minor into the Early Second

However, as one studies the history of Ignatian scholarship, one cannot help but conclude that scholars sometimes appear more interested in their own scholarly priorities and pursuits than in what concerned Ignatius himself.[14] And it may be that in the situatedness of the modern reader, issues that Ignatius set forth as common and uncontroversial have been read in light of modern controversies that the second century bishop could never have anticipated. I have therefore strived to read Ignatius with one question in mind: what was most important to him in his early second century world? One answer to this query continually rises to the surface: Ignatius was primarily concerned with preserving and defending the incarnational narrative as he understood it.

Regardless of how one answers the more technical (some would say 'more relevant' or even 'more interesting') question of whether or not Ignatius knew the Johannine literature in particular,[15] scholars generally concede that at least Ignatius's

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Century: Ignatius and Others as Witnesses against Bauer,' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006): 17–44. On the history of religions, see Hans Werner Bartsch, *Gnostisches Gut und Gemeindetradition bei Ignatius von Antiochien*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie, Reihe 2, ed. P. Althaus, vol. 44 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1940; reprint, Münster: Antiquariat Th. Stenderhoff, 1983); Eduard Alexander Freiherr von der Goltz, *Ignatius von Antiochien als Christ und Theologe: eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, vol. 12.3a (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1894); Cyril Charles Richardson, *The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935; reprint, New York: A.M.S., 1967); Heinrich Schlier, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Ignatius-Briefen*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, vol. 8 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1929).

[14] See comments by Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 17–18.

[15] For a positive appraisal, see Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For the negative conclusion, see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2d edn (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 96–97. A recent discussion of possible New Testament allusions in Ignatius's writings is Foster, 'The Epistles of

christology has striking Johannine affinities.[16] These include, for example, the use of θεός for Christ, the use of stark incarnational language, and the teaching of Christ's simultaneous unity with and subordination to the Father. Thus, Ignatius represents an early example of an incarnational christology outside the Johannine literature,[17] also incorporating Pauline themes within the basic incarnational framework. Lietzmann notes, 'Ignatius's own Christology rests upon a Pauline foundation enriched from John, and he boldly proceeds further upon the road they indicated.'[18]

Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,' 159–86.

[16] Also see Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, Yale Publications in Religion, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); Paul Dietze, 'Die Briefe des Ignatius und das Johannesevangelium,' *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 78 (1905): 563–603; Goltz, *Ignatius von Antiochien als Christ und Theologe*; Édouard Massaux, *Influence de l'évangile de saint Matthieu sur la litérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée*, updated reprint ed., Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium, vol. 75 (Leuven: University Press, 1950); Maurer, *Ignatius von Antiochien und das Johannesevangelium*; Titus Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert: Studien zur vorirenäischen Aneignung und Auslegung des vierten Evangeliums in christlicher und christlich-gnostischer Literatur*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte, ed. Rüdiger Lux and Udo Schnelle, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000); Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*; H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: Mowbray, 1954), 10. Already in 1914 Rackl declared, 'Die Anschauung, daß sich in den Ignatiusbriefen gar keine johanneischen Spuren finden, ist in der Gegenwart nahezu ausgestorben' (Michael Rackl, *Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien: nebst einer Voruntersuchung: die Echtheit der sieben Ignatianischen Briefe verteidigt gegen Daniel Völter*, Freiburger theologische Studien, ed. G. Hoberg and G. Pfeilschifter, vol. 14 [Freiburg: St. Louis, 1914], 320).

[17] T. E. Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 26–33.

[18] Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of the Christian Church* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1961), 241. Vall argues, in fact, that Ignatius's theology 'represents a

Many scholars before me have pointed out the importance or even centrality of Ignatius's incarnational christology to his theology and thought.[19] Pollard writes, 'The focal point in Ignatius' theology is the incarnation.'[20] Corwin suggests that Ignatius's 'total theology … springs from the paradox that Christ is *both* God and Man.'[21] Schoedel says, 'The special mark of Ignatius' theology is the centrality afforded the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.'[22] Camelot writes, 'C'est le Christ qui est au centre de la pensée d'Ignace, comme au cœur de sa vie; c'est par Jésus-Christ que nous connaissons Dieu.'[23] Peter Legarth notes, 'Ignatius' teologi er kristocentrisk. … Inkarnationen betones stærkt i Ignatius' kristologi. Det hedder således i Ef 7,2, at Kristus var født (γεννητός), og Ignatius må med dette udsagn formodes at sigte netop til inkarnationen (ἐκ Μαρίας).'[24] But what, precisely, constituted the 'incarnational narrative' for Ignatius? And what role did it play in his theology, argument, and catholic Christian identity?

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penetrating synthesis of Pauline, Johannine, and Matthean elements' (Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2013], 1)

[19] See Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 17–24. Vall writes, 'All these topics [about which Ignatius writes] … are closely interrelated aspects of a single reality: the mystery of Jesus Christ' (Vall, *Learning Christ*, 12).

[20] Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, 26, 32.

[21] Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 92.

[22] William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 17.

[23] Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres; Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th corrected ed., Sources chrétiennes, vol. 10 (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 21.

[24] Peter V. Legarth, *Guds tempel: Tempelsymbolisme og kristologi hos Ignatius af Antiokia*, Menighedsfakultetets Videnskabelige, vol. 3 (Denmark: Århus, 1992), 131, 136.

THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Nearly a century ago Roman Catholic scholar Michael Rackl noted, 'Von den Tatsachen des menschlichen Lebens Jesu Christi werden besonders hervorgehoben: Geburt, Taufe, Leiden und Tod, Auferstehung.'[25] Similarly, many reduce the 'confession' or 'creed' of Ignatius to such elements, which were used, in fact, by Ignatius himself to summarize the gospel narrative.[26] However, with the term 'incarnational narrative,' I am not primarily concerned with any particular formulaic expression of the narrative (hymn, symbol, or creed), but in both the metaphysical and historical realities Ignatius believed stood behind the diverse expressions. While the form and expression of the various elements of the narrative will vary depending on context and usage, the narrative itself will not change.

When one examines the writings of Ignatius as a whole, a rather clear incarnational narrative emerges, which appears to form the backdrop of all of Ignatius's subsequent theology and thought.[27] The following brief synthetic summary captures the basic tenets of Ignatius's incarnational narrative concerning Jesus Christ: The Son of God, the Logos, who was with the Father before the ages, shared a unique and intimate fellowship with the

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[25] Rackl, *Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien*, 136.

[26] Richardson, *Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch*, 10. The 'creedal' or 'semi-creedal' passages in Ignatius are often identified with Ign. *Eph.* 18.2; *Trall.* 9; and *Smyrn.* 1.1–2. See synthesis in Grant, *Apostolic Fathers: Introduction*, 122. Vall suggests that 'these dense Christological formulations are embedded in every letter' (Vall, *Learning Christ*, 58). He identifies these as *Eph.* 7.2; 18.2; 20.2; *Magn.* 6.1; 7.2; 8.2; *Trall.* 9.1–2; *Rom.* 6.1; 7.3; *Phld.* 9.2; *Smyrn.* 1.1–3.3; *Pol.* 3.2

[27] Isacson criticizes a systematic approach to the study of Ignatius's writings (Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 11–12). Though his concerns are valid especially when attempting to discern the nature of his particular arguments to various churches or the nature of the dissenters found in individual congregations, an attempt to reconstruct Ignatius's general christology must eventually synthesize the exegetical conclusions from the individual letters into a whole.

Father, as well as qualities of deity, including the title 'God.' At the appropriate time, the Father sent forth the Son, who became human with true flesh and blood through the virgin birth. He thus became subject to time and suffering, and as both God and man he truly suffered and died on a cross for the sin of humanity. He truly rose from the dead as both God and man in the flesh, and ascended into heaven to the Father.[28]

Ignatius called the contents of this incarnational narrative 'the gospel,' (*Phld.* 5.1–2; 8.2; 9.2; *Smryn.* 5.1; 7.2), 'speaking with truth concerning Jesus Christ' (*Eph.* 6.2), or simply 'the truth' (*Eph.* 6.2). He also referred to it as the 'mystery' of Jesus Christ (*Eph.* 19.1; *Magn.* 9.1) and 'the faith' (*Eph.* 20.2) or 'the faith of [concerning] Jesus Christ' (*Magn.* 1.1). Also, it may be that 'the teaching of Christ' refers to the same gospel narrative (*Phld.* 8.2). Sometimes when referring to 'Jesus Christ,' Ignatius's intended referent was the entire narrative concerning his person and work, with its present effects and benefits (*Phld.* 8.2). The person and work of Christ in Ignatius are inseparable.

We will see that this incarnational narrative was not only confessed in various oral forms but also through the rites of the local churches, as Ignatius linked both baptism and the eucharist to key components of the incarnational narrative. These activities of the church became themselves actions that confessed the narrative (*Eph.* 5.2; 18.2; 20.2; *Phld.* 4; *Smyrn.* 6.2). In the following sections, I will thus seek to show that faithfulness to the incarnational narrative in both belief and practice constituted the essential identity of catholic Christianity in the mind of Ignatius.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN THE LETTERS OF IGNATIUS

Sustained treatments of Ignatius's theology and thought often include a biographical reconstruction of the last months of his life,

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[28] See the reiteration of the six components of this narrative, including references from Ignatius's letters, in chapter 9, pp. 165–168, and Figure 10, p. 169.

concentrating on the period for which we have the most reliable details: his journey from Antioch to Rome and sojourn in western Asia Minor.[29] This can only be called a snap shot from the life of Ignatius, for apart from this brief period we can be certain of very little about him. However, from the seven letters read in concert with the testimony from Polycarp of Smyrna we can paint a vivid picture of his relationships, struggles, and beliefs. Throughout my analysis of the letters of Ignatius, I will continue to return to the historical context of their composition and reception, as these phenomena are vital for understanding to what degree Ignatius's incarnational narrative was shared by the churches of Asia Minor and Rome.

Having accepted the authenticity of the seven letters, there are several things about which we can be relatively certain—claims within Ignatius's letters that are virtually self-authenticating. For example, we can confidently discern his itinerary, traveling companions, and even personal discussions in certain locations because of the testimony in his letters. In short, no writer could assert certain false statements to an audience that would have had knowledge that could invalidate the statements. Fabrications or gross inaccuracies would have been instantly identified, thus undermining his rhetorical strategy.[30] In this way we may determine several elements to be self-evidently accurate.

With regard to the condition of the churches to which Ignatius was writing, however, one must be cautious. One can discern what Ignatius's perception about a particular church may have been, and also determine his likely sources for this perception. However, many of his statements concerning the actual situation in

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[29] See Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 14–30; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 10–12.

[30] Isacson applies the same type of criteria of self-authenticating statements when discussing Ignatius's description of the Ephesians' condition of obedience in *Eph.* 4.1 (*To Each Their Own Letter*, 43). Such criteria can also be applied to many other statements Ignatius made in his letters regarding which the addressees would have had specific knowledge, and for which Ignatius would have been aware of their ability to authenticate.

those communities are not necessarily self-authenticating, and investigators must consider all evidence before assigning degrees of likelihood to any.[31] Therefore, in later chapters I will focus on the complementary evidence from the regions of his recipients and other parts of the Roman world. By first setting forth Ignatius's subjective perception of catholic identity centered on the incarnational narrative in the following several chapters, I will formulate a hypothesis to validate or invalidate by means of the perceived situation in other writings from approximately the same generation of Christian writers (from about 100 to 150 CE).[32] In

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[31] I am not convinced by any of Trebilco's four examples in which he alleges Ignatius minimized the success of false teachers: *Smyrn.* 4.2–8.2; *Magn.* 11; *Trall.* 2.2; 3.3–5.2; 7.2; 12.2–3; *Phld.* 3.1; 7.1–3; 11.1 (Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, 637–39). In these cases, the evidence can be read in harmony with Ignatius's own intention of both praising and warning his readers. After his rhetorical analysis of *Trallians, Smyrnaeans*, and *Ephesians*, Isacson concludes, 'The opponents are not part of the addressees.' And regarding the Magnesian situation, he concludes that 'there are no actual opponents in the sense of a specific group that could threaten the faith of the addressees, but only some fictitious ones, referred to as an example of what might pose a threat to the faith and unity of the church' (Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 189). However, Trebilco's general warning still stands: 'It seems then that we would be wrong to always take Ignatius at face value' (Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, 639).

[32] The reader will notice that my historiography is not dependent on possible lines of intertextuality, but on likely lines of personal and oral transmission of teaching. This assumes to some degree that the primary vehicle for spreading early Christian theology and thought was not the epistle or treatise, but the spoken word—from teacher to disciples. Thus, I do not think strictly in terms of chronological order of documentary composition, but in terms of personal influences, either oral or written. In this approach, documents represent the particular within a general—a punctiliar instance that captures the thoughts of a particular person within a living tradition. Yet this document always represents the culmination of several years of formulation, teaching, and learning within a living community that both preceded and succeeded the teacher. So, my broad fifty-year range from about 100 to 150 CE allows for a more accurate

this way I will determine the degree to which Ignatius's subjective impression of catholic self-identity likely reflected the actual objective reality.

In the following expositions of Ignatius's letters, I will show that Ignatius appealed either explicitly or implicitly to the incarnational narrative as a basis for his theology.[33] He treated components of the incarnational narrative not as a thing to be proved to his readers, but as a shared axiomatic body of truth from which he could confidently draw theological and ethical principles.[34] Although I have gone back and forth between wanting to present a shorter and simpler brief examination of key formulaic passages in Ignatius's letters that reveal his incarnational narrative, such an approach will not serve my purposes. Instead, it is necessary to conduct a general survey of each letter in its entirety, pointing out ways in which Ignatius relied upon the incarnational narrative as foundational to his theological and practical arguments as well as central to his concept of catholic identity. Though it may be easy to get lost in the details of such an expositional method, any other approach will fail to illustrate the pervasive reliance upon the incarnational narrative in Ignatian thought and result in reducing the narrative to isolated and unrelated formulae rather

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analysis of the ideas of the broader tradition of which Ignatius was a part.

[33] The texts used for text-critical issues is that of Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*. For the English translations, I employ a rather literal translation and provide the original Greek (or, occasionally, Latin) texts, indicating important words in parentheses or providing the original text for passages that are especially ambiguous or difficult to translate.

[34] An awareness of Ignatius's use of logical and comparative connectives such as οὖν, ἵνα, γάρ, ὡς, and οὕτως are critical in an analysis of the place of the incarnational narrative in his arguments. That is, these will indicate whether his christological claims were a logical conclusion of or a logical basis for his theology and thought. If we consistently find elements of his incarnational christology as the logical basis of his arguments, we may conclude that he regarded it as axiomatic for his readers, for one does not rest one's arguments on debated or ambiguous foundations. I will therefore point out in parenthetical notations various logical connectors.

than an integrated pattern of thinking. The implications of this will be summarized in chapter nine.

CHAPTER 4. IGNATIUS TO THE *EPHESIANS*

Ignatius's letter to the Ephesians, the lengthiest of his seven epistles, was written from Smyrna while the bishop Polycarp was present (*Eph.* 21.1). It is also likely that the Ephesian delegation was still present while Ignatius penned or dictated the letter to send with the Ephesian leadership to read to their church (1.3; 2.1). In fact, part of the function of this letter is to thank the church for allowing their deacon, Burrhus, to remain with Ignatius a little longer, an arrangement apparently agreed upon by the leadership present in Smyrna—Onesimus, Crocus, Euplus, and Fronto (2.1; *Phld.* 11.2).

Besides this practical purpose of the letter, Ignatius also takes the opportunity to encourage unity in submission to the bishop and presbyters (*Eph.* 3.1–6.2) and to warn the Ephesian church of itinerant false teachers peddling a docetic heresy, which can only be healed by genuine faith and effective love (7.1–19.3). Though he hopes to write the Ephesians a second letter (20.1), this intention was likely never fulfilled. In the following exposition of *Ephesians*, we will see that Ignatius explicitly and repeatedly affirms a well-developed incarnational narrative that formed the center and source of Ignatius's theology and paraenesis.

EXPOSITION OF *EPHESIANS*

In his opening greeting to his letter to the church in Ephesus, Ignatius referred to Jesus Christ as 'our God' (τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν), one of several divine appellations Ignatius assigned to Jesus Christ.[1]

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[1] Some have tried to distinguish τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν from θεός (without the modification of the possessive pronoun) in an attempt to demonstrate that Ignatius's ascription of deity to Christ is of a lesser quality than that

This title, together with the startling phrase αἵματι θεοῦ in *Eph.* 1.1, reveals in short form an incarnational christology.[2] Though this

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of the Father. See, for example, Eduard Alexander Freiherr von der Goltz, *Ignatius von Antiochien als Christ und Theologe: eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, vol. 12.3a (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1894), 25–26; Jean Rouffiac, *La personne de Jésus chez la Peres apostoliques* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1908), 54. However, this has proved unsuccessful and does not precisely conform to the evidence (see early arguments in Michael Rackl, *Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien: nebst einer Voruntersuchung: die Echtheit der sieben Ignatianischen Briefe verteidigt gegen Daniel Völter*, Freiburger theologische Studien, ed. G. Hoberg and G. Pfeilschifter, vol. 14 [Freiburg: St. Louis, 1914], 154–201 as well as comments in William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 39). Ignatius referred to Christ as θεός (*Eph.* 1.1; 7.2; 19.3; *Trall.* 7.1 [but see variants]; *Smryn.* 10.1 [but see variants]), ὁ θεός (*Smryn.* 1.1), ὁ θεός ἡμῶν (*Eph.* inscr.; 15.3; 18.2; *Rom.* inscr.; 3.3; *Pol.* 8.3), and ὁ θεός μου (*Rom.* 6.3). See Rackl's list of passages 'an Jesus Christus mit zweifelloser Sicherheit θεός genannt wird' in *Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien*, 151. Grant's inclusion of *Eph.* 17.2 is, I believe, a misinterpretation of the text (Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, ed. Robert M. Grant [New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964], 125).

[2] The statement αἵματι θεοῦ does not fit a two-stage christological understanding in which the human acquires a divine status through exaltation or adoption. Rather, for Ignatius to speak of the 'blood of God' implies that the one who bled was God at the time of this suffering (see Kenneth J. Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna: A New Translation and Commentary*, rev. and exp. edn [Zanesville, OH: CHResources, 2009], 75). I believe Bhaldraithe misreads Ignatius when he assigns many of the apparent two-nature christological statements to the risen Lord and sees them as affirming a two-stage christology (Eoin de Bhaldraithe, 'The Christology of Ignatius of Antioch,' *Studia patristica* 36 [2001]: 200–06). Rather, with the phrase 'blood of God'—shorthand for Christ's suffering and death in the incarnational narrative—Ignatius could not have had in mind a post-resurrection condition. This should be read as a pre-resurrection statement confirming that Ignatius viewed Christ as having both divine and human aspects prior to his resurrection.

phrase itself is not the classic incarnational formula of John 1:14, it necessarily presupposes the true fleshly humanity of God. Within this same passage Ignatius also hinted at the shared catholic nature of their faith in the incarnate savior, referring to 'our Savior' (1.1), their mutual relationship 'in Christ' (1.1), and the 'common name and hope' (1.2).[3] The 'name' here is either a reference to Christ or to the derived definitional label, 'Christian.' In any case, Schoedel suggests that the 'absolute use of the term simply underscores the clear sense of identity enjoyed by Christians.'[4]

Ignatius then encouraged the church in Ephesus to love their bishop κατὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν (*Eph.* 1.3), a phrase that appears to mean 'according to the example of' or 'according to the standard of.' In this case, it is perhaps a reference to the common Ignatian concept of imitation of Christ.[5] The standard set by Christ likely hints at a notion that will become more explicit later—Christ's submission to the Father in the incarnation.

After aligning the church's sanctification with submitting to the leadership and glorifying Jesus Christ (*Eph.* 2.2), Ignatius exhorted the Ephesians to unity by appealing to his christology: 'For (γάρ) Jesus Christ, our unwavering life, is the mind of the Father, as also the bishops who were appointed unto the uttermost [places] (οἱ κατὰ τὰ πέρατα ὁρισθέντες) are in the mind of Christ'

Therefore, when Bhaldraithe reads the third phrase in *Eph.* 7.2 as 'in flesh, having become God' in opposition to other alternative readings, he does so in a way that seems to ignore the most natural meaning of *Eph.* 1.1.

[3] From the perspective of rhetorical analysis, Isacson suggests that these phrases 'are here not restricted to the sender and the addressees only, but are inclusive and related to all Christians. However, the use of these words here establishes a sense of solidarity and a common identity between the sender and the addressees' (Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Kari Syreeni, vol. 42 [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004], 36).

[4] See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 43.

[5] See Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, Yale Publications in Religion, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 221–46.

(3.2). The phrase 'appointed unto the uttermost [places]' in reference to the bishops indicates in Ignatius's subjective perception that the episcopal office was spread throughout the world and that he assumed they were in substantial agreement with one another. Though Ignatius used the term 'catholic' only once in his letters (8.2), his concept of a common, general, global, and united community of bishops and churches is found in many forms in his writings, this reference in *Ephesians* 3.2 being one of them.[6] This gives us a first glimpse of Ignatius's sense of a larger catholic community in agreement on definitional standards.[7] We cannot, of course, be certain that Ignatius's estimation of a worldwide unity among the bishops was accurate. But we can be sure that he believed this to have been the case and that his interaction with the catholic leadership of Philadelphia, Smyrna, Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles seems to have only confirmed his expectation—even in the face of the various factious teachers and beliefs that threatened the churches of Antioch and Asia Minor. In light of these considerations, I am unable to accept the statements of Trevett:

> What was surely the case was that Ignatius was not addressing *the* church in Ephesus but rather one of a number in that region, variously untainted by, infected by, promoting or fending off aberrant Christologies, being more or less

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[6] In fact, it should be conceded that the Greek term καθολικός (κατά + ὅλος) overlaps conceptually with the phrase κατὰ τὰ πέρατα, the former emphasizing the whole composed of all its parts, the latter emphasizing the extent of the parts in view of the whole.

[7] Schoedel challenges Ignatius on this point: 'That the monarchical episcopate was universal in this period can hardly be so' (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 49), even though Ignatius himself in this passage does not advance a monarchical formula. His bare use of the plural οἱ ἐπίσκοποι does not demand an assertion of a global extent of monepiscopacy. A worldwide unity of the faith among catholic leadership was Ignatius's point, not the universality of a particular ecclesiastical order. For an alternative voice in the matter of the development of the episcopacy and Ignatius's place in that story, see James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 308–311.

influenced by the heritage of Judaism and its Scriptures, holding to more than one kind of office and order and enjoying more or less charitable contacts with Christians of other persuasions.[8]

In Ignatius's mind, then, to be united to one or more of these 'catholic' bishops would mean to be in unity with Christ and the Father. Ignatius seems to see Jesus Christ himself as the link between the heavenly and the earthly domains. As such, Christ served as the model, means, and mediator of the heavenly and earthly union.[9] Similarly, in *Ephesians* 4.1 the purpose of unity with

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[8] Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 29 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1992), 84. While Ignatius's letters indicate that competing christologies obviously existed, speculations about alternatively organized churches centered on diverse christologies seem to require more assumptions and presuppositions about the nature of early Christianity than what we have evidence for in the letters of Ignatius themselves.

[9] Brent draws on Ignatius's possible use of pagan cult imagery that renders his concept of church hierarchy a τύπος of the divine order and the bishop as an iconic representative of God (Allen Brent, 'The Ignatian Epistles and the Threefold Ecclesiastical Order,' *Journal of Religious History* 17 [1992]: 18–32; Allen Brent, 'Ignatius and Polycarp: The Transformation of New Testament Traditions in the Context of Mystery Cults,' in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 325–49). Though I believe Brent sometimes relies too heavily on the many and varied pagan mystery cult backgrounds when Ignatius can just as easily be interpreted as adapting Old Testament and early Christian imagery, his overall assertions regarding Ignatius's view of divine representation in a liturgical setting seem sound. He advances the view that the bishop-centered order represents the Godhead and an extension of the incarnation: 'Coming "to the unity of God (εἰς ἑνότητα θεοῦ)" is equivalent to coming to "the (presbyteral) council of the bishop (συνέδριον τοῦ ἐπισκόπου)' (*Phld.* 8. 1). Spiritual and fleshly realms are united in the τύποι, so that the redemptive ἕνωσις can take place that leads to ἀφθαρσία' (Brent, 'Ignatius and Polycarp,' 345). This 'extension of the Incarnation' into the community finds its theological foundation in

the bishop and presbyters was to sing praises to Jesus Christ, and through Him to have unity with the Father (4.2–5.1).[10]

Ignatius next affirmed the need to respect the bishop's authority and remain in fellowship with him and the worship he led (*Eph.* 5.2–6.1). The basis for this respect is one component of the incarnational narrative: the master of a house sending a manager (6.1). The concept, though specifically applied to the bishop as the manager of the church, is reminiscent of Matthew 21:33.[11] The christological parallel becomes clear in the next statement, where Ignatius drew his conclusion from the principle of receiving the one sent as one would receive the sender. Whatever the specific application of the first admonition (to fear the silent bishop),[12] it

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the incarnational narrative, which is presupposed in the liturgical typology.

[10] The phrase, 'Jesus Christ is sung' may indicate hymns sung to Christ (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 52).

[11] Though I believe Ignatius knew and used the gospel of Matthew while in Antioch, it is not necessary for Ignatius to have known the written document to have been familiar with the parable of the manager sent by the master. See Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 182. For respect of the bishop, Ignatius used the terms φοβέω (6.1), while for the respect expected of the οἰκονομίαν Ignatius used the term δέχεται, 'to welcome or receive.' In the Matthean parable of the landowner sending his son, the word for the 'respect' expected of the son's coming is ἐντρέπω (Mt 21:37). Luke's gospel uses this same word in connection with the verb φοβέω in the combination 'to fear and respect' (Luke 18:2, 4).

[12] The common view of the 'silent bishop' is often negative—that Onesimus was timid, ineloquent, or non-charismatic in his gifts, or unable to fend off false teachers in debate (Walter Bauer, ed., *Die apostolischen Väter*, vol. 2, Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarpbrief erklärt, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. Hans Lietzmann and Walter Bauer, vol. 4 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1920], 206; Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 48; Peter Meinhold, 'Schweigende Bischöfe: Die Gegensätze in den kleinasiatischen Gemeinden nach den Ignatianen,' in *Fesgabe Joseph Lortz*, ed. Erwin Iserloh and Peter Manns, vol. 2 [Baden-Baden: Grimm, 1957], 467–90; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 56–57; Christine Trevett, 'Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: A Third Error Combated by Ignatius?,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 [1983]: 1–18). For

appears that this particular exhortation is subsumed under the
more general principle that the bishop was to be regarded as the
Lord himself, as both were sent by the Father and were therefore
his representatives. But the logical basis for Ignatius's argument
(indicated by the use of γάρ and οὖν) was the analogy of the
manager sent by the master.[13] A christological argument may lie
just below the surface in the form of an analogy between the
bishop's role as the God-sent manager of the local church and
Christ's role as the God-sent manager of the church of bishops
throughout the world. In this larger argument, Ignatius
presupposed the sending of the Son by the Father, asserting this
pattern as a basis for his ecclesiology.

Throughout this argument, Ignatius wrote in the third person
(τις) rather than the more direct second person, and he even
pointed out that Onesimus had given him a good report about
their orderliness under the authority of the bishop (*Eph.* 6.2).[14]
Onesimus also reported that the Ephesians lived in accordance
with the truth and that no heresy was found among them. In
Ignatius's mind, these three praise-worthy conditions intersected
and supported each other: when the Ephesians lived in good order

more positive motives and estimations of Onesimus's silence, see the two
different explanations in Henry Chadwick, *The Silence of Bishops in Ignatius*
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 169–72; Alvyn
Petterson, 'Sending Heretics to Coventry? Ignatius of Antioch on
Reverencing Silent Bishops,' *Vigiliae christianae* 44 (1990): 335–50.

[13] See Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 46–47.

[14] I take Ignatius's praises here to be self-authenticating, as his
audience would have known themselves whether his understanding by
means of Onesimus's report was accurate or not, and because accuracy on
this point would have been necessary for Ignatius's argument. We can
only suspect that recent events in his life caused him to worry about the
future safety and security of Ephesus. I believe Ignatius likely carried with
him the experience of his home church in Antioch and the more recent
events in Philadelphia, where the situation of potential schism was
apparently so troubling that he claimed he received divine revelation
concerning it (*Phld.* 7.1–2).

under their bishop, they also lived in accordance with the truth and were therefore free from heresy.

For Ignatius, living in accordance with the truth involved truthful speech concerning Jesus Christ. Not only had the Ephesians met these standards of conformity and freedom from heresy, but they went even further: 'But (ἀλλά) you do not even listen to anyone unless he speaks with truth concerning Jesus Christ' (*Eph.* 6.2).[15] It is significant that Ignatius linked heresy specifically to speaking untruthfully about Jesus Christ. It is true that 'heresy' for Ignatius hovered between the meaning of 'faction' and 'false teaching,' but the emphasis is not on the side of the former. In fact I would affirm the exact antithesis of Isacson's claim that 'for Ignatius, fragmentation is a major threat and false teaching could result in fraction.'[16] Rather, the opposite appears to be the case: Ignatius dreaded schism because it could lead to false teaching. Isacson's statement fails to realize that for Ignatius, christology—not ecclesiology—was the center and source of authentic Christian identity.

Given Ignatius's contrast between the right-minded Ephesians and those who speak truthfully concerning Christ as well as the christological direction in which Ignatius's argument ultimately moved (*Eph.* 7.1–2), the emphasis in Ignatius is not merely on factions *per se*, but on false teachings (speech that inaccurately portrays Jesus Christ).[17] It follows, then, that the benefit of remaining in fellowship with the bishop was that the Ephesians

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[15] Greek: ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ ἀκούετέ τινος πλέον <ἢ περὶ> Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λαλοῦντος ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. Whether we follow the critical text of Funk and Bihlmeyer (πλέον, εἴπερ, which Schoedel regards as 'grammatically impossible' [Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 58]), or the emendation by Lightfoot (πλέον ἢ περὶ) (Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, 2d edn, vol. 2 [London: Macmillan, 1889; reprint, New York: Olms, 1973], 47) the implication is the same: living according to the truth and without faction means speaking truthfully concerning Jesus Christ.

[16] Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 50.

[17] See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 58; Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 80.

received the pure truth concerning Jesus Christ, which would effectively save them from heretical false teaching.

What was the content of true speech concerning Christ? Though the Ephesians were not themselves influenced by those who spoke falsely about Christ, Ignatius made them aware that such people posed a threat to them: 'For certain people with evil deceit are accustomed to carrying around the name, but doing things unworthy of God' (*Eph*. 7.1).[18] For Ignatius, living in conformity with the truth meant faithfulness to Christ in both internal faith and external actions. Ignatius warned against hypocrites who did not maintain this conformity: 'It is necessary for you to stay away from them as if they were wild animals. Because they are mad dogs who bite in secret; it is necessary for you to guard against them, [they] being difficult to cure (οὓς δεῖ ὑμᾶς φυλάσσεσθαι ὄντας δυσθεραπεύτους)' (7.1). Had Ignatius stopped at this point, he would have left the Ephesians with essentially two pointed admonitions concerning these shadowy figures: 'stay away from' and 'guard against.' But how were they to do this?

At the logical crux of his argument, Ignatius applied the positive remedy for this poisonous, dangerous madness of heresy: 'There is one healer, flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first suffering then without suffering, Jesus Christ our Lord' (*Eph*. 7.2)[19]

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[18] As suggested above, p. 66, 'the name,' ὁ ὄνομα, is a mark of community identity and may refer to the name 'Christian,' or simply 'Jesus Christ.' The latter seems more probable in the immediately context, since this statement, connected with γάρ, relates to the discussion of speaking concerning 'Jesus Christ' in truth, but because the very name 'Christian' is closely associated with 'Christ,' in the end the meaning is the same—only 'Christians' carry about 'Jesus Christ,' and only those who carry 'Christ' could be regarded as 'Christian.' See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 59.

[19] Instead of ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ θεός, Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, has ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος θεός, with the textual note: 'ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος GL: ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ Athanas. Theodoret. Gelasius Romanus, Severus Antiochenus (Light. 1, 141, 163, 168, 181) Sf Lightf.' Lightfoot opted for ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ, noting: 'This reading is demanded alike by the

This christological confession formed the foundation of Ignatius's argument against the false teachers and also served as the point of departure for untruthful speech concerning Jesus Christ. Thus, Ignatius immediately followed this confession with the admonition: 'Therefore (οὖν) do not let anyone deceive you' (8.1). Behind this confession of faith stands the incarnational narrative of the divine

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great preponderance of authorities and by the antithetical character of the sentence. The substitution ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος θεός may have been due to the fear of countenancing the Apollinarian doctrine that the Logos took the place of the human νοῦς in Christ' (Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2.2*, 49). Strangely, Schoedel swings the same sword in the opposite direction: 'The reading "come in flesh, God" (see John 1:14) is to be preferred to the reading from Patristic quotations "in man, God." The change can be ascribed to the desire of later theologians to avoid any suggestion of an Arian or Apollinarian christology which denied a human soul to Christ (hence "man" instead of merely "flesh" was required)' (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 61). However, NT statements affirming that Christ came ἐν σαρκί (1 Tim 3:16; 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 1:7) as well as other early Christian writings (Pol. *Phil.* 7.1; *Barn.* 5.6; 5.10; 5.11; 6.7; 6.9; 6.14; 12.10; *2 Clem.* 9.5) suggest that Christians would have had to cope with ἐν σαρκί terminology in writings far more important than Ign. *Eph.* 7.2. Grant argues for ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ because 'Ignatius' style favors the patristic reading' (Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 4, *Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Robert M. Grant [Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson, 1966], 39). However, *Eph.* 7.2 is overwhelmingly regarded by scholars as traditional (e.g., creedal or hymnic) material, so one should expect to find deviations from an author's style in such instances. So, on the one hand, we have the biblical and early Christian testimonies of ἐν σαρκί used in reference to the incarnation of Christ, no use of ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ in the same literature, the testimony of the Greek and Latin middle recensions, the more difficult reading in relation to the style of the creedal pattern, and the reading more likely to be changed to counter Apollinarian heresy. On the other hand, with ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ we have the more difficult reading for its biblical and historical context, the positive testimony of patristic writers, the more natural reading within the context of the paradoxes, and the reading more likely to be changed to ἐν σαρκί against adoptionism or in favor of Apollinarianism. Thus, the problem is unsolvable with any degree of certainty.

Son of God becoming truly human by virgin birth, suffering and dying, then rising from the dead in the flesh.

Structurally and rhetorically, this christological confession occupied the center of Ignatius's argument. But what sort of christology was it? Bhaldraithe argued that this was a 'two-stage' christology.[20] However, it must be noted that Ignatius was describing the present condition of the person of Christ. And though not in the form of a historical narrative per se, such a narrative was presupposed in the confession.[21] Thus, for Ignatius

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[20] See Bhaldraithe, 'Christology of Ignatius of Antioch,' 204–6. See above, p. 65, n. 2.

[21] The only possible indication of a two-stage christology is the phrase πρῶτον παθητὸς καὶ τότε ἀπαθής. Yet this emphasized the fact that suffering was an actual part of his experience. We must also remember that Ignatius was not concerned in this particular context with the person of Christ prior to the incarnation. He was rather describing 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' employing a simple pairing of antitheses. Indeed, the confession united realms of existence that were regarded philosophically as mutually exclusive and at odds. For instance, the same thing could not be both γεννητός and simultaneously ἀγέννητος, an assertion that rules out a two-stage christology, as a being that is γεννητός (generate) does not *become* ἀγέννητος (ungenerate). Rather, divinity is properly ἀγέννητος, and can take on the generate quality by becoming 'incarnate' (Jn 1:14). It is also important that we recognize Ignatius's two apparently distinct uses of θεός. In the first instance, ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ θεός, 'God in man,' we seem to have here an assertion not of the person of God in a particular man, but more generally 'deity in humanity,' as we see in the canonical Col 2:9. The noun θεός seems to be more qualitative, as in Jn 1:1, rather than definite or indefinite. The other elements in these dichotomies are also non-personal and qualitative in nature: flesh and spirit, born and unborn, true life in death, and suffering and non-suffering. Thus, it appears θεός is being used in a similar qualitative sense—godhood in humanity, emphasizing the abstract meaning of these terms and coming as close to a two-nature language as one can come without using the terms 'divine nature' and 'human nature' of later fathers and councils. Finally, Ignatius's description of the pre-incarnate Son of God in *Pol.* 3.2, where he is described as ἄχρονον, ἀόρατον, ἀψηλάφητον, and ἀπαθῆ. From this divine condition he 'became visible' and 'passible'

the incarnational narrative stood at the center of his concept of catholic confessional identity vis-à-vis the false identity of the heretics.

The injection of the principles of flesh and spirit in *Ephesians* 8.2 seems strangely out of place unless we recognize that Ignatius believed the otherwise mutually exclusive realms of flesh and spirit had been reconciled by the incarnation of God described in 7.2.[22] The unity of dichotomies in the narrative of Christ became the basis for an entirely new worldview—the unity of antithetical realms in the Christian life.[23] This is probably what was meant by living 'in conformity with Christ.'[24] Thus, the unity of the physical and spiritual in Jesus Christ was the organizing principle not only of Ignatius's theology, but also his ethic. The physical works of the faithful should be that of faith, since Jesus Christ brought together both the physical and spiritual. In Christ the Hellenistic

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for the sake of humanity (*Pol.* 3.2).

[22] See Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 161–62; Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 54–55; Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 161.

[23] Here Ignatius employed his conventional use of the terms σάρξ and πνεῦμα as 'physical' and 'spiritual' rather than 'sinful' and 'righteous' (see Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 81). Thus, the things the Ephesians do physically—that is, bodily—are spiritual acts (e.g., acts of faith or love), because they do everything in Jesus Christ. It is important to note that the basis for Ignatius's statement that their physical deeds are spiritual is that they do all things 'in Jesus Christ'—in conformity with him. See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 64.

[24] The ambiguous prepositional phrase, ἐν Χριστῷ, could mean that they do these things from a position of being spiritually united to Christ, are in fellowship with Christ through fellowship with the church and bishop, are in conformity with Christ's character or work, or something else. In this particular context, it may be that he referred back conceptually to the central confession of Christ's person in *Eph.* 7.2, who is himself 'flesh and spirit' (σαρκικὸς καὶ πνευματικός). Thus, doing something 'in [conformity with] Jesus Christ' would mean that, like Jesus Christ, the physical actions were always spiritual because in Jesus Christ the actions were of both God and man, spiritual and physical.

dichotomies between flesh and spirit, visible and invisible, confession and practice, faith and works, internal and external, have been overcome, for Jesus Christ has united these in his person through the incarnation (*Eph.* 7.2; cf. *Magn.* 13.1).

Ignatius then described the Ephesians' experiences with false teaching. He had apparently been made aware of certain people 'from there' (ἐκεῖθεν) who had passed through with evil teaching, which they refused to receive.[25] This is another allusion to their

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[25] There are several possibilities about the identity of the false teachers Ignatius mentioned in *Eph.* 9.1. First, it may be that Ignatius learned of these false teachers from Onesimus and that the encounter was recent (6.2). This would imply that there had also been a recent expulsion of false teachers from Ephesus, rendering those remaining faithful to the bishop. This seems to fit with the only possible understanding of the term ἐκεῖθεν, 'from there,' as the origin of the false teachers. Yet Ignatius's letter to the Ephesian church does not appear to imply a recent purification, as is clearly the case in the letter to the Philadelphians. It does not appear in *Eph.* that those who were 'from there' had left recently, for otherwise why would Ignatius feel the need to warn them of false teachers on the prowl, as he did in *Eph.* 7? Therefore, recent heresy and defection from the church in Ephesus does not seem probable if we are to take Ignatius's language seriously. As a second option, it may be that there was a period of time that passed between Ignatius's writing of chapter 7 (where he warned of false teachers) and chapter 9 (where he indicated that he found out that they had, in fact, encountered these teachers). This, however, would be mere conjecture, and the letter itself does not have any indicators that the mention of the defectors in *Eph.* 9 were based on new information of which he was unaware in chapter 7. Onesimus relayed to Ignatius the health of the church in Ephesus and apparently mentioned that the church does not 'listen' to those who speak falsely about Jesus Christ (6.2). The same image of 'covering ears' to avoid the bad teaching from false teachers in *Eph.* 9.1 suggests that the information about false teachers mentioned in 9.1 was received from Onesimus when Ignatius visited with him, and is already implied in 6.2. A third possibility is that Ignatius was referring to a heresy and defection similar to or identical with that mentioned in 1 Jn 2:19; 4:2–4; and 2 Jn 1:7. This would require that the Johannine epistles were written in Ephesus and that Ignatius had been made aware of the defection. Indeed,

proper response to false teaching mentioned briefly in 6.2. The false teachers 'from there [Ephesus]' mentioned by Ignatius in 9.1 were guilty of speaking falsely about Jesus. Given the positive confession about Christ's person in the incarnational scheme (see 7.2), it is likely that these false teachers rejected something about the incarnational narrative.[26]

Next Ignatius used a metaphor of Father, Son, and Spirit constructing a building to explain how the Ephesians had successfully resisted the false teachings (*Eph.* 9.1). He then enlisted a pilgrim metaphor to further elaborate on this notion (9.2).[27] Just

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these 'antichrists' would have left an abiding mark on the church there, and Ignatius may have learned of this defection either by reading the correspondence itself or from somebody like Onesimus or another person from Ephesus (Burrhus, Crocus, Euplus, or Fronto). It may be that this is the earliest indication of a tradition that places the Johannine epistles in or near Ephesus. This suggestion would place the heresy and defection in the memorable past, with a document to evidence it. This scenario seems to fit the language and tone of Ignatius's letter, which praises them for their purity and faithfulness in resisting false teachers, as well as warns them of false teachers on the loose, even though they had apparently handled false teachers in the past. A final consideration is that Ignatius was aware of either the Apocalypse's message to Ephesus, mentioning their resistance to false apostles, or was made aware of this past situation either through a living witness of the incident or a person who had read the Apocalypse and communicated this situation to Ignatius. There can be no doubt that Ignatius was surrounded by people who were at least familiar with the Apocalypse, since he spent time in Philadelphia and Smyrna and received visitors from Ephesus. Therefore, this option cannot be ruled out.

[26] This supports the claim that these false teachers were similar to (if not identical with) those 'antichrists' mentioned in 1 Jn and 2 Jn, who rejected the true flesh of Jesus Christ. See Wolfram Uebele, *"Viele Verführer sind in die Welt ausgegangen": die Gegner in den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien und in den Johannesbriefen*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, vol. 151 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001). On the docetic character of the heresy in Ephesus, see Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 56.

[27] See Philip A. Harland, 'Christ-Bearers and Fellow-Initiates: Local Cultural Life and Christian Identity in Ignatius' Letters,' *Journal of Early*

as the central mechanism for placing the believer into the temple was the cross of Christ (9.1), the center of expressed Christianity was also Christ (9.2).[28] The crux of the incarnational narrative—the cross—forms the center of Ignatius's soteriology.

Ignatius next employed the phrase σαρκικῶς καὶ πνεθματικῶς, modifying μένητε (or μένετε), to encourage the Ephesians to remain spiritually and physically in Christ by means of purity and self-control (*Eph.* 10.1–3).[29] The idea seems to be that the internal and external must cohere rather than be separated (see 8.2). Thus, ἐν Χριστῷ takes on more meaning than merely a spiritual or nominal union with Jesus. It refers to a physical expression and manifestation of his character and actions. The underlying thought appears to be that only this union of flesh and spirit in the life of a Christian is in harmony with the perfect unity of two realms in the person of Christ—who in his person and work has united 'both flesh and spirit' (*Eph.* 7.2).

After additional ethical exhortations focused on Jesus Christ (*Eph.* 11.1–12.2), Ignatius briefly discussed Christ as the object not only of faith but also of love—the former being the internal reality

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Christian Studies 11 (2003): 481–99.

[28] Interestingly, in the first metaphor of the temple, the Ephesians are described as passive and static—an apparent emphasis on their immovable position by the work of God (*Eph.* 9.1). With the final phrase, 'your faith is your means of ascent, and love is the way leading up to God,' Ignatius transitions from his normal word for the concept of inner, invisible, spiritual transformation (faith), and outer, visible, physical manifestation (love). Where James may have spoken of faith and works and Paul spoke of the fruit of the Spirit, Ignatius spoke of faith and love in the same manner. Ignatius moved from the static and passive metaphor of the temple to the active metaphor of the pilgrimage (9.2).

[29] The reading μένητε, represented by the Latin and Armenian translations, should be preferred over the reading μένετε of the Greek short recension. The corruption from η to ε (or the reverse) is common in Greek manuscript transmission. It is less likely for such a corruption to occur in Latin or Armenian translations. Most importantly, though, the subjunctive voice parallels the first subjunctive, εὑρεθῇ, and completes the compound ἵνα clause in which it is found.

and the latter the external expression.[30] Both were inseparable aspects of the Christian life because the internal and external—invisible and visible—had been reconciled in Jesus Christ. The progression for Ignatius is thus: 'Faith is the beginning, but love is the end, and the two being in unity are divine'[31] (*Eph.* 14.1). The couplet 'faith and love' forms the center and source of all things that 'contribute to excellence.' That his meaning emphasized the practical unity of faith and works is evident in 14.2, where Ignatius reminded them of the blatant hypocrisy of the false teachers (see 7.1)—a disease that could be healed only by faithfulness to the divine-human Christ (7.2). He also emphasized the performance of fleshly things 'spiritually' in *Ephesians* 8.1, which can be understood by Ignatius as doing all things 'in Jesus Christ' (8.2). Therefore, the thought in 14.2—the congruity between faith and love—seems to fit with Ignatius's emphasis on the unity of the spiritual and physical, which springs forth from the unity of God and man in Jesus Christ.

Ignatius carried the same thought through to the next section, using the themes of silence and authenticity versus speech and falsehood (*Eph.* 15.1). The consistency of inward and outward realities governed Ignatius's ethic, which he anchored in his christology—'There is one teacher who spoke and it came to be; and even the things he has done without speaking (ἃ σιγῶν δὲ πεποίηκεν) are worthy of the Father.'[32] The close connection

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[30] See Olavi Tarvainen, *Glaube und Liebe bei Ignatius von Antiochien*, Luther-Agricola-Seura Schriften, vol. 14 (Joensuu: Pohjois-Karjalen Kirjapaino, 1967), 98.

[31] The reading θεοῦ ἐστιν in the Greek short recension has all the marks of a corruption of the original text. Clearly, θεός ἐστιν is the more difficult reading while θεοῦ ἐστιν makes more syntactical sense but is grammatically awkward. Yet the external support for the difficult reading is overwhelming, being represented by the Latin and Armenian versions as well as Syriac fragments.

[32] Schoedel notes, 'It is the transcendent Christ who speaks and it is done; it is the incarnate Christ whose silence speaks volumes. That Ignatius is thinking of two distinct stages in the unfolding of the divine purpose is suggested also by the fact that the two parts of the sentence are

between speaking and acting in silence (without speaking), and the revelation of God through the Son or λόγος is well-established in Ignatius (see *Rom.* 8.2).[33] In fact, the very next sentence reveals how closely this concept was in Ignatius's thought: 'The one who truly possesses the message (λόγον) of Jesus is able to heed even his silence, in order that he may be complete—that he may act through what he says and may be known through what he does not say.' (*Eph.* 15.2). It is Christ who calls Christians to account and enables them to do and act with integrity. This conformity to Christ as the standard and enabling principle of the Christian ethic was likened by Ignatius to the temple of God—which, according to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, is the body of Christ, the church, and ought to reflect this mysterious unity (15.3).

So, we see that Ignatius drew his ethical exhortation of faith and practice, saying and doing, from a christological principle—the Son's authentic revelation of the Father and the Christians' mystical union with Christ, who enables them to live in such a way. When we posit the incarnational narrative as the center and organizing principle of Ignatius's thought, as he himself established in *Ephesians* 7.2, all of these assertions become subordinated to this primary doctrine of Christ's person and work.

Borrowing from imagery in 1 Corinthians, Ignatius next exerted a stern warning against false teachers, arguing from the lesser to the greater—the physical to the spiritual.[34] All would agree

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not simply antithetical but are also joined by the tandem particle καὶ … δέ which elsewhere marks the introduction of a separate but related point' (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 78). See Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres; Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th corrected ed., Sources chrétiennes, vol. 10 (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 71. For another possible background, see *Gos. Pet.* 10, discussed below, pp. 195–196.

[33] See Thomas G. Weinandy, 'The Apostolic Christology of Ignatius of Antioch: The Road to Chalcedon,' in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 75.

[34] That Ignatius knew and had read 1 Cor is virtually undisputed (Paul Foster, 'The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,' in *The Reception of the New Testament in*

that adulterers would not inherit the kingdom of God (*Eph.* 16.1), so those who committed spiritual adultery and corrupted the faith of a believer would fall under greater punishment (16.2). Here the physical reality becomes a basis for the spiritual truth. In the next section, Ignatius anchored this principle again in the example of Jesus Christ: 'For this reason the Lord received ointment upon his head, in order that he may breathe incorruptibility into [or onto] the church' (17.1).[35]

In contrast to having received the Spirit of truth from Christ and the teaching of incorruption, Ignatius warned against another 'ointment,' a false teaching that corrupts (*Eph.* 17.1).[36] Viewed in

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the Apostolic Fathers, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 164–67).

[35] The historical image is similar to that anointing in Mt 26:6–13 and Christ breathing on the apostles after his resurrection in Jn 20:19–23 (see Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 87). However, given Ignatius's preceding thought regarding the temple (*Eph.* 15.3) and in light of Paul's thought of the church as the dwelling of the Spirit (1 Cor 3:16–17), this passage may refer to the anointing Christ received in baptism when the Spirit descended upon him as a dove, anointing him for ministry. In Jn 1:32–33 we see the same pattern as Ignatius's in *Eph.* 17.1: Christ received the Spirit and was thus equipped to baptize others by the Spirit. Ignatius's assertion that Christ breathes incorruption on the church may then be seen as an allusion to Jn 20:22. The incorruption that Christ breathes on the church was the incorruption of the Spirit, and the Spirit's role, we are told in the Gospel of John, is to 'teach' (Jn 14:26) and to lead into all truth (16:13) (See Camelot, *Ignace, Polycarpe, Martyre de Polycarpe*, 72–73). There may also be in Ignatius's background an allusion to the messianic text of Isa 11:2, as it was this Spirit that Christ received at His baptism and then breathed on the church, conferring upon believers through their own baptism together with the sound teaching of the Spirit preserved through true teachers of the church—those who speak in conformity with the truth of Christ within them (*Eph.* 15.1–3). On the possibility of post-baptismal chrismation in the rite of the Antiochene church, see below, p. 189, n. 39.

[36] This contrast between the true and false anointing may relate to 1 Jn 4:4–6. In both Ignatius and 1 John we see the emphasis on the one who is in the believers (1 Jn 4:4; *Eph.* 15.3) and the contrast between the

the light of the Johannine teaching of the Spirit, Ignatius's emphasis on what believers should 'receive' makes sense: 'Why do we not all become wise, receiving the knowledge of God, which is Jesus Christ? Why foolishly perish, ignoring the gift which the Lord truly sent' (17.2)?[37] Thus, it seems to make the most sense of Ignatius's use of concepts, images, and language to see the image and language of 1 Corinthians 3 and 6, with their emphasis on the indwelling Spirit in *Ephesians* 15–16, and from there the Johannine teaching of Christ's reception and bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the church as the complex conceptual background of *Ephesians* 17. Though the Matthean narrative of the anointing of Christ's head with oil seems to stand at the fore in 17.1, it serves merely as a venere to contain Ignatius's intended referent—the Spirit that comes from Jesus Christ.

In his call to true wisdom (*Eph.* 18.1), Ignatius appealed to the cross of Christ, then in 18.2 he rested his argument explicitly on the incarnational narrative in a modified proto-creedal form.[38] He wrote, 'For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to the plan of God, both from the seed of David and

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true and false teaching (1 Jn 4:5–6), as well as the reference to the Spirit—in John as 'the Spirit of truth' (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), and in Ignatius as the 'ointment' received by the Lord, the 'incorruptibility' breathed into (or onto) the church, and even 'the gift which the Lord has truly sent' (*Eph.* 17.2). This final line lies in a context that refers back to the good anointing Ignatius urged the Ephesians to receive—the same one received by the Lord and breathed into the church, 'the knowledge of God, which is Jesus Christ' (17.2). This begins to make sense if Ignatius referred to the Johannine doctrine of the Spirit, who was sent by the Father (Jn 14:16, 26), who abides in the believers (14:17), and who constitutes the presence of Christ among his disciples (14:18). It is this Spirit who teaches the believers all things and leads them into truth (14:26).

[37] The allusions to the Spirit's teaching, wisdom, and anointing have a strong Johannine background here as well. See 1 Jn 2:20–21; 4:6.

[38] See Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 68–69; Henning Paulsen, *Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, vol. 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 58–54.

from the Holy Spirit; who was born and baptized in order that by the suffering he may cleanse the water.'[39] So close was the incarnational narrative to Ignatius's heart that his next line recounted it in the guise of mysteries hidden from 'the ruler of this age' (*Eph.* 19.1). In the much-discussed 'star hymn' of 19.2, Ignatius described the celestial phenomena that announced the revelation of the work of God hidden from previous generations.[40]

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[39] In light of the various lines of evidence and after tracing Ignatius's thought through this passage, it seems that the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the church in opposition to false teaching is the most probable sense of *Eph.* 15–18 and that both Pauline and Johannine imagery lie in the background of his case. Yet at the heart of the matter stands Ignatius's incarnational narrative of the Son of God sent from the Father, incarnate in the virgin, born God and man, baptized, crucified, and raised, who sent the Holy Spirit after his heavenly ascension (18.1–2).

[40] It seems apparent that Ignatius was not presenting something new in this hymn, but rather appealing to images and concepts with which the Ephesians were already familiar—something he knew would help strengthen their stance against false teaching and perhaps more accurately, in the particular case of the Ephesians, strengthen their proclamation of the truth in the face of any potential deviation. The background, therefore, could be originally Matthean, with which the Syrian Ignatius may have been familiar. There is also the possibility that the imagery of Rev 12 may be in view, though this seems to me less probable. On possible backgrounds of *Eph.* 19.2, see Allen Cabaniss, 'Wisdom 18:14—An Early Christian Text,' *Vigiliae christianae* 10 (1956): 97–102; Camelot, *Ignace, Polycarpe, Martyre de Polycarpe*, 75–77; Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 176–83; Reinhard Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit*, Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments, vol. 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); Paulsen, *Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien*, 175–80; Heinrich Schlier, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Ignatius-Briefen*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, vol. 8 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1929); Hendrik F. Stander, 'The Starhymn in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians,' *Vigiliae christianae* 43 (1989): 209–14; Christine Trevett, 'Apocalypse, Ignatius, Montanism: Seeking the Seeds,' *Vigiliae christianae* 43 (1989): 313–38; Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 185–86.

The result of the revealed mysteries—the virgin conception, the birth of Christ, and the death of the Lord—were important to Ignatius's argument. In 19.3 he stated in jubilant language:

> Every magical art—every [spiritual] bond—was broken, ignorance caused by wickedness disappeared, and the ancient kingdom was toppled, when God appeared as human (διεφθείρετο θεοῦ ἀνθρωπίνως φανερουμένου) for the renewal of eternal life; and what had been prepared by God took a beginning. From that point, all things were stirred up, because of the plan to bring about (διὰ τὸ μελετᾶσθαι) the destruction of death.

These incarnational statements reprise the earlier statement in 18.2. And this recasting of the same incarnational narrative has strong connections—both conceptual and verbal—to the 'one physician' confession in 7.2, as well as to similar passages in his other letters (e.g., *Smyrn.* 1.1–2).

Ignatius said that he intended to write another letter to Ephesus in order to further explain the subject about which he began to speak: 'the plan regarding the new man Jesus Christ (τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, see Eph 2:15), in his faith and in his love, in his suffering and resurrection' (*Eph.* 20.1). We must note the general outline of this prospective treatise—'the new man,' which we might categorize as the person of Jesus Christ, 'his faith and his love,' which we might call the ethical implications of his person and work applied to the Christian life (see *Eph.* 1.1; 14.1), and 'his suffering and resurrection,' which encompasses the central aspects of Christ's work. Ignatius, however, would likely have seen these as three facets of one incarnational narrative forming the center and source of his theology and paraenesis. So important was this subject to Ignatius that it warranted a separate letter itself, though we have already seen that this crucial narrative had already played a major role in his letter to the Ephesians at the fundamental level of axiomatic truths upon which he drew theological, practical, and boundary-setting implications.

Transitioning into his closing statements, Ignatius exhorted the Ephesians to continue to gather together in unity (*Eph.* 20.2). Even here Ignatius inserted quasi-creedal language, around which the center of the Ephesians' communion with one another was to revolve. They were to gather 'in one faith and one Jesus Christ who

is from the family of David according to the flesh, who is son of man and son of God' (20.2). This gathering was a function of obedience to the bishop and presbyters and the center of eucharistic worship. Thus Ignatius closely associated community, unity, and submission to authority with eucharistic worship and christological orthodoxy as the 'medicine of immortality.'[41] The 'antidote' image bears strong resemblance to the original healing power of Jesus Christ—the 'one physician,' who is himself the healer of the poisonous bite of the false teachers (*Eph.* 7.2). Without downplaying the significance of eucharistic worship, it seems best, given Ignatius's thought, not to limit the φάρμακον ἀθανασίας simply to the consecrated bread itself, but to the entire scheme of unity in all of its aspects—enduring union under the headship of the bishop and presbyters and around the true confession of Christ. These things are literally embodied in the confessional nature of eucharistic worship.[42]

RECEPTION BY THE EPHESIANS

A full-bodied incarnational narrative in Ignatius's letter to the Ephesian church can be synthesized as follows: the divine Son of

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[41] See discussion of the phrase 'medicine of immortality' in Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 97–98. Schoedel, however, seems to miss the confessional nature of the eucharistic worship here, the incarnational narrative which Ignatius had summarized in repeated and varied forms in the context of this passage.

[42] See *Smyrn.* 7.1, where 'confessional' language is used explicitly in conjunction with the eucharist. Thus, even in a symbolic interpretation of the bread and wine, the eucharist becomes a physical means of positive christological confession. If a person believed in the incarnational narrative, partaking of the body and blood of Christ symbolically would provide a clear, physical manifestation of that internal confession. However, if a person refused to believe in the incarnational narrative, even a symbolic meal representing the true flesh and blood of Christ would have been unacceptable. This also applies to Ignatius's even stronger language of eucharistic realism in *Smyrn.* 7.1. See Michael J. Svigel, 'The Center of Ignatius of Antioch's Catholic Christianity,' *Studia Patristica* 45 (Peeters, 2010): 367–371.

God, who shared a unique relationship with the Father as well as the title and qualities of deity, became human with true flesh and blood through the virgin birth. He thus became subject to time and suffering, and as both God and man he truly suffered and died on a cross for the sin of humanity. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He currently resides as the exalted Messiah.

Figure 4: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's *Letter to the Ephesians*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Eph.* insc.; 1.1; 18.2; 19.3; 20.2
2) Incarnational union	*Eph.* 1.1; 7.2; 19.3; 20.1; 20.2
3) Birth and life	*Eph.* 7.2; 18.2; 19.1
4) Suffering and death	*Eph.* 7.2; 9.1; 16.2; 18.1, 2; 19.1; 20.1
5) Bodily resurrection	*Eph.* 20.1
6) Heavenly assumption	*Eph.* 7.2

In light of the predeeding examination, it is apparent that Ignatius treated the incarnational narrative as fundamental to authentic catholic Christian identity, theology, and thought. In fact, he appealed to this narrative in repeated and varied formulae in his arguments. It seems the incarnational narrative formed the central, organizing, and unifying principle of Ignatius's theology and paraenesis.[43] However, some could argue that this proves nothing concerning the views of the churches in western Asia Minor or in Ephesus—that is, Ignatius's perspective does not in itself indicate the actual catholicity of the narrative and its place in early Chrisitan identity formation. Perhaps Ignatius's model was idiosyncratic. Or perhaps Ignatius was mistaken in his expectation that the

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[43] Lotz calls this an '"incarnational" view of existence that unites the spiritual and the physical worlds' (John-Paul Lotz, *Ignatius and Concord: The Background and Use of the Language of Concord in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Patristic Studies, vol. 8, ed. Gerald Bray [New York: Lang, 2007], 162).

incarnational narrative stood at the center of catholic Christianity in the minds of his readers.

Yet when we place the composition and reception of the letter in its historical setting, it becomes difficult to posit a serious disagreement between Ignatius and the Ephesians regarding the content and status of the incarnational narrative. We must remember that during the composition of the letter the Ephesian leaders were personally present with Ignatius. It is also almost certain that this very letter was delivered to the church in Ephesus by the hands of those leaders as they returned to Ephesus. Because the incarnational narrative played a fundamental role in Ignatius's thought, it would have been impossible for others to ignore it.

So, any theory that the Ephesian leaders were actually in disagreement with Ignatius on the definitive place of the incarnational narrative in the Christian faith runs against several important unlikelihoods. First, it is unlikely that Ignatius would have given such a positive appraisal of the church in Ephesus if the Ephesian bishop and presbyters had expressed disagreement with Ignatius's primary theological concerns or had communicated to Ignatius the community's disagreement with their own bishop and presbyters on this matter. Second, it is unlikely that the Ephesian leaders would have received and transmitted a letter to their church (and to other churches) that advocated a radically new and unique (or even known but marginal) incarnational narrative that set definitional boundaries contrary to their own Christian self-definition. Third, had the Ephesian church disagreed with the very heart of Ignatius's theology, it is unlikely that they would have continued to support Ignatius by underwriting the ongoing ministry of Burrhus (*Eph.* 2.1), which was the practical occasion of the opening section of the letter.

Although they may not have expressed it with precisely the same language as Ignatius (who himself varied his formulations and expressions), we must conclude that the Ephesian leadership had no problems with the language Ignatius used to express his christology. Nor would they have been alarmed by the preeminent place of christology in his theology and thought. Furthermore, because Ignatius appealed to various elements of the incarnational narrative to support his practical and polemical arguments, he treated the christological assertions as axiomatic truths that required no defense as far as his audience was concerned. Though

he indicated that some people rejected them and therefore arrived at all sorts of theological and practical errors, Ignatius proceeded with his arguments as though the Ephesian church already held to the incarnational narrative, allowing him to build from this common theological foundation in new and creative ways. In short, it appears likely that Ignatius and the Ephesian leadership were in agreement on the place of the incarnational narrative as the center of Christian self-definition and source of paraenesis and polemics.

CHAPTER 5. IGNATIUS TO THE MAGNESIANS

The city of Magnesia, about fifteen miles southeast of Ephesus, lay on the Maeander River, about midway on a route from Ephesus to Tralles. Like the Christians in those neighboring cities, the church in Magnesia sent delegates to Ignatius while he was held in Smyrna. These included their bishop Damas, presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and the deacon Zotion (*Magn.* 2.1). Likely based on information acquired from his discussions with these representatives from Magnesia, Ignatius instructs the church to respect their youthful bishop (3.1) and to follow Christ's example of humility and unity (6.1–7.2). He also urges them to avoid ταῖς ἑτεροδοξίαις μηδὲ μυθεύασιν (8.1), focusing his attention on avoiding the obsolete practices of Judaism (8.1–10.3) and embracing the Christian faith (11.1–13.2). Though this letter is nearly half the length of his letter to the Ephesians, all of the elements of Ignatius's incarnational narrative find a place in Ignatius's brief exhortation (14.1).

EXPOSITION OF MAGNESIANS

Relying on firsthand representations about the church's health from the bishop Damas along with the presbyters Bassus and Apollonius and the deacon Zotion, Ignatius said the Christians at Magnesia had a 'well-ordered' (πολυεύτακτον) love toward God.[1] He also stated that the primary goal of his letter to the *Magnesians*

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[1] Ignatius used a similar term, εὐταξίαν, in reference to the Ephesian church in *Eph.* 6.2, where Onesimus relayed the good order of the church under the bishop and in line with the truth about Christ.

was to write concerning 'the faith of Jesus Christ' (*Magn.* 1.1). Thus, we ought to expect—barring any understandable distractions and excurses—an exposition centered on Christ.

Ignatius prayed that in all the churches there would be a union of flesh and spirit, which comes from Jesus Christ (*Magn.* 1.2). He also prayed for a union 'of faith and love' and 'of Jesus and the Father.' We have already seen in *Ephesians* that a union of flesh and spirit in the individual sense meant continutity between faith and love, that is, an outer physical manifestation of the inner spiritual reality—the antithesis of hypocrisy. In the corporate sense it indicated unity within the body and submission to the leadership as an earthly representation of the spiritual reality. Both of these were modeled after components of Ignatius's incarnational narrative, and both appear again in *Magnesians*. As in *Ephesians*, Ignatius evidences his reliance on a presupposed incarnational christology for his theology and paraenesis. That is, because Christ was both flesh and spirit (*Eph.* 7.2)—a point, it seems, that Ignatius had no need to defend before his readers—there should also be a union of flesh and spirit in the churches, which is a union of faith and love.

That Ignatius asserted a union between 'Jesus and the Father' is important, especially in light of the fact that *Magnesians* does not explicitly refer to Jesus as θεός.[2] However, referring to a union

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[2] In *Ephesians* Ignatius referred to Jesus as θεός six times (*Eph.* insc.; 1.1; 7.2; 15.3; 18.2; 19.3). In *Romans* he refers to Christ as θεός four times (*Rom.* insc. [twice]; 3.3; 6.3). In *Smyrnaeans* it is used at least once (*Smyrn.* 1.1) and perhaps twice more in 6.1 and 10.1. In *Polycarp*, Ignatius uses the term once (*Pol.* 8.3), and there is a possible use of the term in *Trall.* 7.1. Only in *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians* does he not use the divine appellation. Grant suggested that those two letters, concerned as they were with the 'Judaizing heresy,' would not have been a good arena for dropping θεός (Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 4, *Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Robert M. Grant [Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson, 1966], 7). Also see Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2013), 97. Yet this explanation seems implausible for several reasons. First, though Ignatius did not use the term θεός explicitly in these letters, he did use other language that ascribed deity

between the Father and the Son functions as an expression of deity that would have been offensive to any who rejected or downplayed the deity of Christ.[3] The fact that Ignatius called this 'that which is more important' (τὸ δὲ κυριώτερον) indicates a special theological

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and equated the work of the Father and Son in striking ways (see *Magn.* 1.2; 6.1; 7.2; 8.2 and comments in Charles Thomas Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, Studies in Biblical Literature, vol. 12 [New York: Lang, 2000], 136–38). Even Grant acknowledges that in the language in *Magn.* 6.1 and 7.2 'Ignatius speaks … of the life of the divine Son Jesus Christ' (Robert M. Grant, 'Conflict in Christology at Antioch,' *Studia patristica* 18, no. 1 [1983]: 142). Second, the explanation assumes Ignatius was so concerned about offending Judaizers that he felt the need to amend his message. In fact, the opposite seems to better fit his overall tone and personality. Ignatius seems to have had little patience for Judaizers, and attempting to appease Jewish elements by altering his language about Christ does not seem plausible considering the sharp language he used against false teachers who deviated from his christology. Third, in Ignatius's polemic against what appears to be docetic christologies that denied the true humanity of Christ, he did not hesitate to emphasize the fleshly nature of Christ's body, using the offensive term σάρξ without hesitation. Was the term θεός any less offensive to the Judaizer than the term σάρξ to the docetist? In reality, θεός was simply one of many terms that Ignatius used to communicate the same idea, and Ignatius used the word either casually, placing no great significance upon it, in proto-creedal material, or even in concert with other descriptions of deity (*Eph.* 7.2) (see discussion on Ignatius's use of θεός in Cyril Charles Richardson, *The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1935; reprint, New York: A.M.S., 1967], 40–45). Nevertheless, we will see in both *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians* that Ignatius used other language that communicated the deity of Christ, perhaps in more technical and less ambiguous terms than θεός.

[3] In fact, one is reminded of the account in John's Gospel in which Jesus claimed, 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30), after which we are told the Jews reacted with an attempt to stone him (10:31). The basis for the stoning was blasphemy: 'You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God' (10:33). One might suppose that Ignatius's emphasis on the unity of Jesus and the Father in *Magn.* 1.2 would have incited a similar response from Jews or Judaizers.

emphasis placed on this unique relationship between the Father and Son. He did not, however, speculate about the precise nature of the relationship, but simply affirmed it, praying that the churches to which he wrote would continue to affirm it as well.

In *Magnesians* 1.3, which concludes this section expanding on how Ignatius desired to address 'the faith of Jesus Christ' (1.1), Ignatius confirmed that Jesus Christ stood at the center of his thoughts. Though his last personal noun was πατρός, the pronoun ᾧ in the next phrase refers not to that nearest antecedent, but rather to Christ, for in him 'we will … reach God.'[4] Jesus Christ was the source of the union of 'flesh and spirit,' the faith 'of Jesus Christ' brought about acts of love, and the christological union of 'Jesus and the Father' stood as the most important concept of all.[5]

Ignatius used aspects of the incarnational narrative to exhort his readers to a particular action by paralleling the heavenly and earthly orders in an exhortation to submission within the local church. In *Magnesians* 2.1 Ignatius mentioned his fellowship with

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[4] If this dative pronoun indeed refers to Christ, we know that Christ stands foremost in his mind as the logical precedent in his thought, displacing the grammatical antecedent in his writing. It is, however, possible that we can translate ἐν ᾧ as 'in which,' and take the antecedent as the main subject of the previous sentence: ἕνωσιν, in which case we reach God 'by union.' I have my doubts about this, considering Ignatius's other statements about 'reaching God' and what this entails. However, we must acknowledge this as a real possibility. Ignatius may be saying that by means of union of flesh and spirit, faith and love, and Jesus and the Father, we will reach God if we patiently endure in this world. There seems to me in this statement nothing contrary to Ignatius's overall thought and theology. Yet even in this case, the center of this union is 'Jesus Christ,' as is clarified by Ignatius's opening statement in *Magn.* 1.1.

[5] I am aware of Corwin's arguments for interpreting this phrase as the (mystical) 'union with Jesus and with the Father' rather than the interpersonal union of Jesus and the Father (Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, Yale Publications in Religion, vol. 1 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960], 261). However, see comments in William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 105.

the Magnesian bishop and presbyters as well as with the deacon, Zotion, of whom he said, 'whom I may enjoy, because he submits to the bishop as to the grace of God and to the body of presbyters as to the law of Jesus Christ.' Just as the presbyters and bishop are to function in harmony with each other, though the bishop functions as a presiding elder, so also the Father and Son function in harmony, though the Son functions in a role of submission to the will of the Father. Ignatius's analogy was not ad hoc or arbitrary, but drew on an understanding of the relationship of unity and distinction between the Father and Son common in this historical period.[6]

Another application of the incarnational lifestyle followed. In their outward action of submission to their earthly bishop Damas, the Magnesians did not simply submit to a man (οὐκ αὐτῷ δέ), 'but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop over all' (*Magn.* 3.1). Here 'bishop over all' refers to the Father, indicating that in Ignatius's mind the Father occupied the highest place in the heavenly hierarchy, while the Son occupied the second. This would correspond with Ignatius's description of Zotion's relationship to the bishop Damas and to the presbyters Bassus and Apollonius in *Magnesians* 2. Zotion was subject to the bishop as to the grace of God and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ.[7]

In *Magnesians* 3.2, Ignatius admonished the Magnesian church to submit to the bishop and elders 'without hypocrisy.'[8] He

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[6] See Michael J. Svigel, 'Power in Unity, Diversity in Rank: Subordination and the Trinity in the Fathers of the Early Church,' a paper presented to the 56th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 18, 2004, San Antonio, TX.

[7] It is uncertain whether Ignatius saw the earthly ecclesiastical structure as continuous with that of the heavenly, that is, a continuous chain of submission from the Father to the church (Father—Son—Bishop—Presbytery—Deaconate—Church) or if he was drawing these together as flesh and spirit are parallel (Father—Son—Spirit—Heavenly Host || Bishop—Presbytery—Deaconate—Church). Either way, Ignatius viewed the earthly manifestation of the church and its order as 'fleshly' (i.e., physical) and the heavenly order as divine or spiritual.

[8] The textual variant here between ἡμᾶς or ὑμᾶς is not relevant to

explained that disobedience and hypocrisy toward the earthly bishop were tantamount to a much more serious offense: disobedience and hypocrisy toward the heavenly bishop. In his argument Ignatius attempted to encourage greater respect for the earthly bishop, Damas, by appealing both to the example of Zotion and the presbyters Bassus and Apollonius and by drawing a parallel between the fleshly, earthly situation and the divine, heavenly situation of submission. Ignatius could only do this, however, if both of his foundations were secure in the minds of his hearers. That is, Ignatius regarded the heavenly order as so well-established that he felt no need to defend it; rather, he assumed it as the basis for his argument in support of the bishop's earthly authority.

In *Magnesians* 4 Ignatius referred to a group who called a person 'bishop' but hypocritically acted independently of his oversight by failing to meet together according to the commandment. This act, in Ignatius's mind, was tantamount to being called a Christian but not actually being one. Ignatius apparently received word that such people existed in Magnesia, but we cannot tell based on this whether it was just a few or many. We may assume the former, for in his address to the church as a whole the hypocrites who disregard the bishop appeared as a minor threat—bad examples to be avoided.[9]

Ignatius then called his readers to a decision. Life and death lay before each person and each one would go to his or her own place (*Magn.* 5.1): by wedding 'faith and love' as the internal and external expressions of true faith, Ignatius said true believers lived

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the current discussion, though I side with ἡμᾶς found in the shorter Greek recension and its Latin translation. See Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 192.

[9] For a similar appraisal of the situation in Magnesia, see Thomas A. Robinson, *The Bauer Thesis Examined: The Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 11 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 185–91 and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 29 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1992), 84–87.

without hypocrisy. They had the stamp of God through Jesus Christ (5.2). Because of the illustration of the two coins and the images impressed upon them, it seems Ignatius was speaking of a reality that was visible to all—the confession and the lifestyle, or 'character,' of a person. Believers have the character of God impressed upon them 'through Jesus Christ.'[10]

We come now to the point of Ignatius's admonition. Believing that he received what he thought to have been a fair picture of the congregation in Magnesia, which was, for the most part, favorable, Ignatius offered this advice: 'Be eager to do everything in godly harmony' (*Magn.* 6.1). He referred again to an analogy between the earthly and heavenly realms: 'The bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles and the deacons, who are most dear to me, having been entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ' (6.1). In this ordering Ignatius deviated from his previous τάξις described in *Magnesians* 2 and 3.[11] On the surface it appears that Ignatius placed the council of the apostles in a position above Jesus Christ. However, Ignatius may have actually been drawing on the account of the church's early history and the ordering of the deacons recalled in Acts 6, so the 'council of the apostles' (συνεδρίου τῶν ἀποστόλων) was not a heavenly council, but the historical apostles—the council that originally founded the church in Jerusalem and the diaconate. In

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[10] Contra Schoedel's opinion (*Ignatius of Antioch*, 110–11), this may refer to the initial baptismal rite (see Rom 6:5–11). It may also be that Ignatius was making a conceptual association with the traditional 'Two Ways' teaching, with which Ignatius may have been familiar from his home in Antioch. For true believers, the life of Jesus Christ was in them when they chose to die into his suffering, another possible allusion to baptism, but also an emphasis on the lifestyle of self-denial that followed conversion, reminiscent of the 'way of life' (*Did.* 1.1), which decision was sealed by the baptism of the candidate. See Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 35, 148; Clayton N. Jefford, 'Did Ignatius of Antioch Know the Didache?,' in *Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History, and Transmission*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 77 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 343–44.

[11] See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 113–14.

this instance a reference to the universal (catholic) church may be at work: as the apostles were sent by God not merely to the local church, but to the whole church worldwide, this made God the Father the supreme bishop. Under him, as far as the earthly catholic church was concerned, were the apostles themselves; then, in Acts 6, under the spiritual ministry of the apostles and for the sake of harmony, the deacons served. In this case 'service of Jesus Christ' could refer to the task of the deacons in their roles of service in the churches. This early establishment in the worldwide church, then, was to be reflected in the local churches in Ignatius's day by the order of bishop, presbyters, and deacons.[12]

Ignatius then drew on components of his incarnational narrative, describing Jesus Christ as the one 'who before the ages (πρὸ αἰώνων) was with the Father (παρὰ πατρὶ ἦν) and appeared at the end of time (καὶ ἐν τέλει ἐφάνη)' (*Magn.* 6.1).[13] This passage therefore asserts the existence of the Son with the Father 'before the ages,' an indication of the pre-creation existence of the Son. In Ignatius's thought, the Son was with the Father until he was sent forth to appear 'at the end.' Yet it is not the mere mention of this initial component of the incarnational narrative that is important but the way in which it functioned in Ignatius's argument. He used this statement about Jesus Christ as a basis for his exhortation. Just as the Father and Son were together (παρά) and the Son went forth to appear by the will of the Father, 'Therefore, let everyone respect one another, having received the same attitude as God (ὁμοήθειαν θεοῦ), and let no one look on the neighbor according to the flesh, but in Jesus Christ always love one another' (*Magn.* 6.2).[14] The unity of purpose and distinction of function between the Father and the Son implied by Ignatius's short incarnational statements provided the basis for the admonition to be unified in the earthly realm in close and loving fellowship.[15]

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[12] One finds a similar analogy in *1 Clem.* 42.1–4.

[13] Based on Ignatius's usage of φάνω in *Eph.* 19.2, it seems probable that ἐφάνη in *Magn.* 6.1 was a shorthand for the incarnation.

[14] There is a similar parainetic appeal to the incarnational narrative in Phil 2:1–11.

[15] This will be confirmed in *Magn.* 7.2, with Ignatius's parallel

This earthly order was to be maintained 'as a type and a teaching of incorruptibility' (εἰς τύπον καὶ διδαχὴν ἀφθαρσίας).[16] Considering Ignatius's mode of argument to this point, the earthly local church order was to reflect the heavenly and universal order of the Father and Son as a type and teaching of those heavenly truths.[17] This assumes, of course, a common agreement between

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statement concerning Christ, 'who proceeded from one Father and is with the one and returned (τὸν ἀφ᾽ ἑνὸς πατρὸς προελθόντα καὶ εἰς ἕνα ὄντα καὶ χωρήσαντα).'

[16] For examples of the use of ἀφθαρσία in reference to Christ or the heavenly realm, see *2 Clem.* 14.5; 20.5; *Diogn.* 6.8.

[17] Schoedel says that that τύπος refers to 'the ministry as providing in their whole way of life a standard, pattern, or example of the teaching (a hendiadys) which leads to incorruptibility' and points to canonical examples in Rom 6:17; Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:9; 1 Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7; and 1 Pet 5:3 (*Ignatius of Antioch*, 115). This type of view is held by the majority of scholars (Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres; Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th corrected ed., Sources chrétiennes, vol. 10 [Paris: Cerf, 1998], 84–85; Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Kari Syreeni, vol. 42 [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004], 88; Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, 2d edn, vol. 2 [London: Macmillan, 1889; reprint, New York: Olms, 1973], 121). Corwin suggests that the phrase refers to the mystical union with God that takes place only within the church, and that the 'type' of incorruptibility 'is the picture that suggests the reality of life which will be reached when men have "attained unto God"' (*St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 262–63). However, these interpretations seem to me to ignore the broad context and developing argument in *Magnesians*, as well as Ignatius's own usage of τύπος in *Trall.* 3.1 in reference to the bishop as a τύπον τοῦ πατρός. Rather, I believe Schoedel's comments on *Magn.* 1.2 with reference to the union of the Father and Son should be understood as applying to the 'model' of unity through submission in the earthly church: 'The union of Father and Son is a model for the prefet concord of the Christian community' (*Ignatius of Antioch*, 105). And Isacson's comments on Ignatius's next statement in *Magn.* 7.1 is also instructive here: 'The topic of the unity with the bishop and the presbyters is supported by an anlogy

Ignatius and the Magnesians on that heavenly order. Had his readers been unaware of or opposed to the relationship of unity and subordination between the Father and the Son alluded to in 1.2 and further developed in 7.2 and 13.2, his appeal to this component of the incarnational narrative would have undermined rather than strengthened his argument.

That the heavenly order between the Father and the Son was seen as the theological foundation for Ignatius's earthly order was made more clear in *Magnesians* 7.1—'Therefore just as the Lord did nothing without the Father (being united [with him]), neither through himself nor through the apostles, so neither do you act without the bishop and the presbyters.'[18] Again, the idea is that the functioning of Christ in union with the Father (ἡνωμένος ὤν) was to serve as the basis for the church's union with the bishop and the presbyters in their own work, though it was to be a union in subordination. In this connection, Grant writes, 'In Ignatius's view the model for the relationship between Christians and their bishop is provided by the relationship between Jesus and the Father. The relationship is described in terms almost certainly developed from the Gospel of John.'[19]

Echoing (or anticipating) his own illustration in *Ephesians* 9, Ignatius drew on temple imagery to reinforce his desire for unity in

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with Jesus Christ in 7:1. Jesus Christ is an example in his relationship to the Father' (*To Each Their Own Letter*, 88). Interestingly, Isacson says in his interpretation of *Magn.* 7.1 what I believe Ignatius was saying in 6.2—but in reverse. Christ's relationship with the Father is an anology of the unity with the bishop and presbyters; and the unity with the bishop and presbyters is a type (or example) of the heavenly union of Father and Son. Also see the perspective of Brent discussed above, p. 68, n. 9.

[18] The reader should pay special attention to the function of the οὖν in 7.1, which should help us understand the meaning of the τύπος in 6.2, as this becomes an interpretive key in understanding the argument by analogy Ignatius made between the heavenly and earthly orders, assuming the former and more firmly establishing the latter.

[19] Robert M. Grant, ed., *After the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 46.

Magnesia (*Magn.* 7.2).[20] He then returned abruptly to the christological foundation for unity. Ignatius regarded Christ as having been παρὰ πατρὶ prior to the incarnation (see 6.1). From that position he was sent forth from the Father (ἀφ᾽ ἑνὸς πατρὸς προελθόντα) and during his earthly sojourn he remained in union with the Father (εἰς ἕνα ὄντα).[21] After that, he returned again to the Father (χωρήσαντα) (*Magn.* 7.2).

My point in this extended exposition is this: throughout his entire argument regarding unity of the church through subordination to the bishop and presbyters, Ignatius relied on a particular pattern drawn from his incarnational narrative. It must be borne in mind that Ignatius's primary exhortation was unity and submission in the local church. To strengthen this exhortation he relied upon principles from his christological understanding, which understanding he did not feel the need to establish or defend. Rather, the incarnational narrative served as the foundational and axiomatic maxim in his argument, suggesting that Ignatius expected the tenets of this christology to bear the logical and rhetorical weight he placed on them. For his argument to stand, therefore, his readers had to have shared his incarnational christology and the subtleties of expression regarding Christ's relationship with the Father. Ignatius therefore expected his readers to understand and accept his doctrine of Christ, and this expectation came after spending some time with representatives of the Magnesian leaders themselves.

Some of those in Magnesia who may have been operating independently of the bishop and presbyters—a situation implied by the exhortations against insubordination in 7.1—were likely guilty of the errors suggested in *Magn.* 8–11. Because he was partially relying on information from others and partly drawing on his own experiences with what he viewed as deviant forms of Christianity, Ignatius himself may have been uncertain about the specific nature

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[20] See 1 Cor 3:15–16 and Eph 2:21.

[21] Vall takes this as a reference to Christ's economic unity with God rather than ontological: 'the fundamental orientation of Jesus' life on earth as directed "toward" the Father in obedience to his will' (Vall, *Learning Christ*, 265).

of the threat.[22] He began by saying, 'Do not be deceived (μὴ πλανᾶσθε) by differing doctrines or old myths, because they are useless' (8.1).[23] While ἑτεροδοξίαις could refer to novel ideas that

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[22] Ignatius may have been operating at the level of conjecture, importing his own experiences as bishop of Antioch, the recent problems in Philadelphia (*Phld.* 8.2), and his discussions with such Asian bishops as Polycarp, Onesimus, Damas, and others. Thus, Ignatius likely wrote regarding at least potential, if not probable, threats based on his experiences and the input of the representatives of Magnesia.

[23] It should be noted here that Ignatius did not clearly equate 'differing doctrines' (ταῖς ἑτεροδοξίαις) and 'old myths' (μυθεύμασιν τοῖς παλαιοῖς) by using the conjunction καί, but rather uses μὴ ... μηδὲ. In such cases the two elements that share a common verb are not necessarily associated (Mt 6:2; 10:9–10; 22:29; 24:20; Mk 12:24; Lk 12:22; 14:12; 1 Cor 5:8; 2 Tim 1:8; 1 Pet 5:2; 1 Jn 2:15), and rarely equated (see 1 Jn 3:18). So, when Ignatius warned against 'differing doctrines' and 'old myths' we should not suppose that these are descriptions referring to the same discernible group. In fact, in the historical situation in Magnesia or western Asia Minor, they may not be referring to specific groups at all, but to distinguishable tendencies that Ignatius knew to be possible threats because of his own experience. However, regardless of whether Ignatius had one group or several in mind, his emphasis in the following section is on a Judaizing tendency in which docetism did not seem to play a role (Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 87; Vall, *Learning Christ*, 75). For some examples of the various views of the number of opponents with which Ignatius contended, see Walter Bauer, ed., *Die apostolischen Väter*, vol. 2, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarpbrief erklärt*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. Hans Lietzmann and Walter Bauer, vol. 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1920), 238–40; Paul J. Donahue, 'Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,' *Vigiliae christianae* 32 (1978): 81–93; Michael D. Goulder, 'Ignatius' "Docetists",' *Vigiliae christianae* 53 (1999): 16–30; Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 16–17; Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2.2*, 373–88; J. W. Marshall, 'The Objects of Ignatius' Wrath and Jewish Angelic Mediators,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56 (2005): 1–23; Peter Meinhold, *Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, vol. 97 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), 19–36; Charles Munier, 'Où en est la question d'Ignace d'Antioche? Bilan d'un

contradict a standard belief about something either old or new, the designation μυθεύμασιν τοῖς παλαιοῖς suggests an older system of beliefs, and in any case it is this Judaistic system toward which he launched his attack in *Magn.* 8–10.[24]

In the next sentence, in which Ignatius provided the rationale for his statement that these deviations were worthless, he declared that 'Judaism' was a mutually exclusive category from 'grace' as well as from Jesus Christ (8.2), for even the godly prophets lived 'according to Christ (κατὰ Χριστόν)' (8.1–2). Abiding by the standards of Judaism (κατὰ Ἰουδαϊσμόν) was different from abiding by the standard of Christ. The godly prophets were persecuted, being inspired by grace, so the disobedient could be convinced of the truth of the gospel narrative 'that there is one God who made himself known through Jesus Christ his son, who is his word that proceeded from silence, who in every way pleased the one who

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siècle de recherches 1870–1988,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 398–413; Jerry L. Sumney, 'Those Who "Ignorantly Deny Him": The Opponents of Ignatius of Antioch,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1993): 299–324; Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873), 356–99.

[24] The term παλαιός indicates something old or former, a description appropriate to Judaism, but not proto-gnosticism or docetism (see *Magn.* 9.1). I believe the former term, ἑτεροδοξίαις, refers to the tendency toward a docetic christology, while the latter refers to Judaizing tendencies: two distinct but equally dangerous deviations from the incarnational narrative that must be avoided. However, had Ignatius wanted to more closely equate these two elements as two sides of the same coin, he could have used καί as the conjunction rather than μηδέ (see Titus 1:14). The solution cannot be found simply in the fact that Ignatius commenced with a diatribe against Judaism as he saw it. We need not expect a carefully planned and executed argument in letters written in the historical situation in which Ignatius wrote, and in fact we probably ought not to. Either way, both things—whether referring to the same category of people or to different categories—are regarded by Ignatius as 'useless' (*Magn.* 8.1).

sent him' (*Magn.* 8.2). Thus did Ignatius distinguish what he viewed as catholic Christian identity completely distinct from Judaism, suggesting that the prophets themselves suffered persecution for the sake of the incarnational narrative.

Not only this, but Ignatius seems to have argued that Christ was also the personal means by which the one God had always revealed himself in history, as I understand the controversial phrase, 'his word that proceeded from silence' (*Magn.* 8.2).[25] Many take this as a reference to the revelation of God by means of the incarnation.[26] Rather, the idea seems to be that whenever God revealed himself to humankind throughout history, he did so by means of the Son, or Logos, who is also God (see *Rom.* 8.2).[27] We find this same thought expressed more clearly and in greater detail

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[25] The much-discussed ὅς ἐστιν αὐτοῦ λόγος ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών has been read in its alleged *Religionsgeschichtliche* context in light of similar gnostic motifs. See discussions in Leslie W. Barnard, 'The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch,' in *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background*, ed. Leslie W. Barnard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 19–30; Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 123, n. 11; Henning Paulsen, *Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, vol. 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 110–22; Patrick J. Ryan, 'The Silence of God in Ignatius of Antioch,' *Prudentia* 20, no. 2 (1988): 20–27; Heinrich Schlier, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Ignatius-Briefen*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, vol. 8 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1929), 37–38. The arguments in favor of such a relationship have not endured scrutiny (see especially Martin Elze, 'Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Christologie der Ignatiusbriefe' [Ph.D. diss., Eberhard-Karls-Universität, 1963], 56–59; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 120–22).

[26] See Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 62; Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 96; Vall, *Learning Christ*, 261–265.

[27] This is also how I understand Jn 1:18. See the similar concept in *Wisdom of Solomon* 18.14–15, where 'the word' is the active power of God at the time of the Exodus. See comments in Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of the Christian Church* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1961), 242.

in the pre-incarnational 'logos' christology of Justin Martyr, and we might therefore suggest that Justin adapted his more developed notion of what we might call Old Testament 'logophanies' from teachers that shared the same opinions as Ignatius.[28] So, as part of Ignatius's intention to center the Old Testament revelation on Jesus Christ and the incarnational narrative, he asserted that the λόγος that came to the Old Testament prophets was none other than Jesus Christ in His preincarnate state as 'Son' revealing the Father, 'who in every way pleased the one who sent him' (*Magn.* 8.2). The Word sent by God to the prophets in the old dispensation was the same Son of God who became incarnate in the new.[29] Thus, reverting back to Judaism made no sense; Judaism itself pointed to Christ. We begin to see here a hermeneutical

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[28] Justin also asserted that between the creation and incarnation, the Son submited to the will of the Father: 'I have proved that it was Jesus who appeared to and talked with Moses, Abraham, and, in short, with all the patriarchs, doing the will of the Father' (*Dial.* 113.4). Accordingly, it was the Son who was sent by the Father to judge Sodom (*Dial.* 56.23; 60.2); indeed, he appeared in whatever forms the Father willed (128.2). The Son thus delivered messages to mankind according to the Father's will as the Angel of the Lord (56.10; 128.2; 140.4), and Justin even said he served or ministered to the Father in the economy of creation prior to the incarnation (*Dial.* 58.3; 60.2; 60.5; 61.1; 125.3 126.5). It is in this connection that Justin described the Son as occupying the second place (ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ) to God in rule and power (*1 Apol.* 12.7; 13.3–4; 32.9; 60.5–7). English translation is that of Thomas B. Falls, Michael Slusser, and Thomas P. Halton, eds, *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho*, Selections from the Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003). Greek text of Justin's apology is from Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis*, Patristische Texte und Studien, ed. Kurt Aland and E. Mühlenberg, vol. 38 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994).

[29] This pattern is found more explicitly in Justin's discussion of the pre-incarnate Christ. Ignatius thus serves as a historical bridge between John's assertion that no one has seen God at any time, but that the only-begotten God has revealed him, and Justin's view that every encounter with the divine in the Old Testament was actually the Word of God.

approach to the Old Testament that was regulated by the incarnational narrative—an Ignatian practice that will become even more apparent in *Philadelphians* 8.2.[30]

In *Magnesians* 9 Ignatius contended that many Jews who were practicing the 'old' (παλαιοῖς) came to 'newness of hope' (καινότητα ἐλπίδος). That is, they converted to Christianity, no longer keeping the Sabbath, 'but living according to the Lord's day (κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες), in which also our life rose up through him and his death' (9.1). Therefore, for Ignatius, celebration of the Lord's day was itself a confession of a vital component of the incarnational narrative—Christ's resurrection from the dead.[31] Even with regard to the new day for corporate eucharistic worship, the incarnational narrative stood at the center of the distinct Christian identity vis-à-vis the old way of Judaism—and by extension, whatever forms of Judaizing Christianity Ignatius intended to contest. In Ignatius's mind, living in accordance with Judaism meant living without Christ, and even the prophets (Christ's spiritual disciples) were expecting Christ as their one

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[30] See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 124.

[31] Ignatius inserted the parenthetical comment, 'which certain ones deny' (<ὃν> τινες ἀρνοῦνται). On the textual problem, see Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 196, the reading of which is followed here. In keeping with Ignatius's emphasis on a cohesion of internal confession and external actions, those who 'deny' do so either by word or actions (as in Tit 1:16). In this case it appears to be a denial by actions. Ignatius charged that those who keep the Sabbath deny by their actions that they do not really believe the Lord rose on the first day, otherwise they would keep the Lord's day. This corresponds as to 'confessing' (ὁμολογοῦμεν) by living according to Judaism in *Magn.* 8.1. Those who did this had not received grace. It appears, then, that the side remark ('which certain ones deny') refers to the true significance of worship on the Lord's day as opposed to the Sabbath. In this case, it does not appear to be a direct denial of the reality of the death and resurrection, which stands at the background to the issue of lifestyle and keeping the Sabbath in this particular context.

teacher.[32] Thus, Ignatius regarded Christ as the sole point of God's revelation, both in the old and new dispensations.[33]

In *Magnesians* 10 Ignatius reemphasized the uniqueness and exclusivity of Χριστιανισμόν as opposed to Judaism.[34] Ignatius added that whoever was called by any other name (that is, 'Judaism'), 'does not belong to God' (10.1). Based on this matter of exclusivity of religions because of contradictory practices—and primarily because such pratices implicitly deny aspects of Christ's person and work—Ignatius felt prepared to draw an implication in the form of an imperative: 'Therefore, cast aside the bad leaven, which has become old and has turned sour, and turn to the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ. Be salted by him, in order that no one among you may become corrupted, because you will be disapproved by your stench' (10.2). He exhorted his readers to be so committed to Christ and to live according to him that the old system should be rejected. Thus, for Ignatius, Christian identity centered about the person and work of Jesus Christ, a confessional standard against which alternative views were judged, and to which the standard of even the preferred day of worship should be measured.[35]

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[32] The references to the only teacher in *Magn.* 9.1 and 9.2 reflect the same kind of exclusivity of divine revelation through Christ as in the phrase 'who is his word that proceeded from silence' (*Magn.* 8.2).

[33] Ignatius concluded with a statement of what happened to these prophets who awaited the coming of Christ, being his spiritual disciples until he arrived (*Magn.* 9.2). This may be a reference to the early tradition in which the dead saints came out of their tombs when Jesus was resurrected (Mt 27:52–53). See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 124, n. 7.

[34] Though some have expressed concern over the traditional early date of Ignatius's letters because of the use of the term 'Christianity,' the term 'Judaism' for the one religion was already commonly in use, and it seems quite reasonable that Ignatius would choose to contrast that religious system with a Christian version.

[35] That is, the prophets and godly men of the old system of Judaism converted to Christianity when Christ came. The same thought occurs in *Magn.* 9.1. As the fulfillment of Judaism, Christianity rendered Judaism obsolete.

Beginning his closing section, Ignatius declared that he had not heard that these things were a problem among the Magnesians, but he nevertheless regarded them as a potential threat (11.1) likely drawing on personal experiences with Judaizers in Philadelphia (see *Phld.* 8.2). In contrast to the 'useless opinions' of the false teachers, his readers were to be convinced of the central elements of the faith: 'the birth and the suffering and the resurrection, which happened at the time of the rule of Pontius Pilate. [These things] were truly and certainly done by Jesus Christ, our hope, from which may none of you wander away' (*Magn.* 11.2). Ignatius reemphasized the truthfulness of the incarnational narrative as the distinguishing mysteries of Christianity that rendered Judaism obsolete and established Christian identity.

Ignatius then praised the Magnesians to elicit an empathetic response (*Magn.* 12). He knew that they had Jesus Christ within them, which led to humility and a sensitive conscience to his words, yet he further exhorted the church to be 'firmly grounded' in the teachings of Christ and the apostles (*Magn.* 13). They would then prosper 'physically and spiritually'—another reference to the duality that indicates a person who is genuine within and without, 'in faith and love.' They would also prosper 'in the Son and the Father and in the Spirit,' an early proto-trinitarian association (see *Eph.* 9.1). They would also thrive 'in the beginning and in the end,' that is, throughout their entire Christian lives. This spiritual and physical prosperity was to be in godly harmony with the bishop, presbyters, and deacons (*Magn.* 13.1). Ignatius exhorted the church to be subject to the bishop 'and to one another' (13.2). As developed previously in his argument, the basis for this principle of submission was the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Father: 'as Jesus Christ [was subject] to the Father according to the flesh.'[36] Behind this argument stands a particular understanding of

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[36] The Greek in Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 198 reads ὡς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τῷ πατρὶ κατὰ σάρκα. There is some question as to whether or not κατὰ σάρκα is part of the original text. If so, then Ignatius was using the incarnate Son as the standard by which true submission was to be measured. If it is not original, Ignatius may have still been alluding to Christ's submission to the Father during his earthly ministry, but he

the incarnational narrative, emphasizing the unity of the Father and Son, as well as the submission to the Father's will in coming from heaven to earth and the reality of the incarnation.

Thus, we see good order in both the heavenly and earthly relationships with Christ standing at the center and bringing both together in unity—'in order that there may be both physical and spiritual unity' (*Magn.* 13.2). The unity Ignatius had in mind was not equality, but harmony within a God-ordained taxonomy. Unity for Ignatius came through order and submission within the church.[37] This order was modeled after the order of Christ's relationship with the Father as the primary example, which was followed by the apostles and emulated in the post-apostolic church as well.

In his conclusion, Ignatius made certain statements that shed light on his subjective sense of catholicity in his day. He affirmed that the Magnesian church was 'full of God,' and thus he felt no need to exhort them at length, but rather requested prayer for himself and the church in Syria (*Magn.* 14). This implied a relationship between the communities of Syria and those of western Asia Minor. He passed on several greetings from the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans (*Magn.* 15), then noted, 'And the rest of the churches (καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ δὲ ἐκκλησίαι) also greet you in honor of Jesus Christ.' Here we may add the bishop Polybius of Tralles (*Trall.* 1.1), Philo, a deacon from Cilicia who assisted Ignatius, and Rhaius Agathopus from Syria (*Phld.* 11.1). Beyond that, we cannot be sure what other representatives from other churches may have been with Ignatius at the time of this writing, yet Ignatius's reference to αἱ λοιπαὶ ἐκκλησίαι suggests a much broader community than simply two more congregations beyond Ephesus and Smyrna and their close neighbor, Tralles.[38]

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was not necessarily limiting it to this time. Schoedel suggests that the entire passage here may have been riddled with pro-trinitarian interpolations, though the same arguments, I suppose, could be made in the other direction toward deletion (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 131). The phrase κατὰ σάρκα applied to Christ's incarnation is used by Ignatius in *Eph.* 20.2 and *Smyrn.* 1.1.

[37] Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 99–100.

[38] Schoedel makes a good argument that the letters to the

RECEPTION BY THE MAGNESIANS

Throughout *Magnesians*, Ignatius's arguments and exhortations presupposed the incarnational narrative of the pre-incarnate Son becoming human, suffering, dying, and rising from the dead.

Figure 5: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's *Letter to the Magnesians*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Magn.* 1.2; 6.1; 7.1, 2; 8.2
2) Incarnational union	*Magn.* 13.2
3) Birth and life	*Magn.* 11
4) Suffering and death	*Magn.* 5.2; 11
5) Bodily resurrection	*Magn.* 9.1
6) Heavenly assumption	*Magn.* 7.2

He did not seek to establish or defend this narrative, but rather presupposed that his Magnesian readers had already embraced this christology. It is unlikely that the Magnesian leaders present with Ignatius at the time of this writing would have rejected this christology while accepting Ignatius and his writings. It is further inconceivable that Ignatius had found the Magnesian christology to be incompatible with his own, for he spoke in positive terms of the church itself and relied upon an presumedly shared christological narrative to support his paraenesis.

Through this examination of Ignatius's letter to the Magnesians, we can conclude the following. First, for Ignatius, the incarnational narrative stood at the center of true Christian identity. He affirmed the preexistence and equality of the Son with the Father as well as the fleshly incarnation of the Son and reality of his passion and resurrection. Furthermore, Christ was the focal point

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Magnesians and Trallians had actually been written prior to the letter to the Ephesians, which explains why the letter to the Ephesians had no personal greetings from those churches (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 132).

of God's personal revelation both in the old and new dispensations, and as such his coming rendered the old system of Judaism obsolete. Christian self-identity vis-à-vis Judaism centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Second, as he did in *Ephesians*, Ignatius appealed to various elements of the incarnational narrative to bolster his arguments for local church order and ethical exhortations. He referred to the sending of the Son from heaven, the ontological unity of Father and Son amidst functional distinction, and the return of the Son to the Father to draw implications regarding equality, order, and authority in the local and 'catholic' churches. Even if ecclesiastical church order may have been a point of controversy at this time, the christological foundation upon which Ignatius rested his particular ecclesiology does not appear to have been a point of dispute. Ignatius may have held conversations with the Magnesian leadership regarding these matters and had ascertained that this christological understanding was, in fact, the view held in Magnesia.

In sum, in the letter to the church in Magnesia, Ignatius provides evidence for Christian identity centered on a clearly established incarnational narrative. This christology was also the source of his paraenesis for right practice and the source of his polemic against deviant confessions.

CHAPTER 6. IGNATIUS TO THE *TRALLIANS* AND *ROMANS*

We have already seen the important role the incarnational narrative played in Ignatius of Antioch's theology and thought in his letters to the churches in Ephesus and Magnesia. In this chapter we will explore the same pattern of christocentric theology and paraenesis in his letters to Tralles and Rome. Though these letters are each unique and bear little resemblance to each other, I treat them together in this chapter because the quantity of their contributions to our evidence is relatively lesser than that derived from *Ephesians*, *Magnesians*, *Philadelphians*, and even *Smyrnaeans*. However, the quality of the evidence is of the highest value. I pair these smaller treatments of *Trallians* and *Romans* because both letters were written by Ignatius while he was still in Smyrna awaiting a move north to Troas, and thus they represent both the great diversity exhibited in Ignatius's emphases as well as the marked unity of theology.

The church of Tralles, neighorboring Magnesia a little over fifteen miles to the east, had sent their bishop, Polybius (*Trall.* 1.1), to greet and encourage Ignatius in Smyrna. In return for their devotion, Ignatius encourages the church to submit to the bishop, presbyters, and deacons as the key to unity and protection from the potential threat of false teaching (2.1–7.2). In this warning, Ignatius emphasizes the need to flee from the mongerers of docetism at all costs (8.1–11.2).

By contrast, the church in Rome received no such urgent warnings against false teachings. On the one hand, *Romans* appears to be the most formal and impersonal of Ignatius's correspondences—impersonal in the sense that it includes no

personal greetings to members of the Roman church or from those present with Ignatius in Smyrna.[1] On the other hand, the letter betrays an immensely personal passion of Ignatius as he bears his innermost heart to the Roman Christians with regard to his desire to endure his sentence of death and prove the genuiness sof his faith through martyrdom (*Rom.* 1.1–8.3). Though the purpose of the letter is quite different from the other three epistles written from Smyrna, Ignatius's request for the Romans' prayers and his plea for them not to hinder his martyrdom is supported by the central elements of the incarnational narrative of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection.

EXPOSITION OF *TRALLIANS*

Ignatius greeted the church of Tralles as loved by 'God the Father of Jesus Christ' (*Trall.* inscr.) and perceived the church to be 'holy' and 'having peace in flesh and spirit,' indicating a high level of harmony within the church and continuity between belief and practice.[2] Yet Ignatius pointed out that this peace came 'by means of the suffering of Jesus Christ, our hope in the resurrection unto him' (*Trall.* inscr.). Thus, key components of the incarnational

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[1] Ignatius does not seem to know anybody in Rome by name, with the exception of those Syrian Christians who preceded him there (*Rom.* 10.2).

[2] Trevett writes, 'As usual, then, this Ignatian letter is a mixture of praise, encouragement and, one suspects, wishful thinking. In 3, 2 the bishop expressed confidence that the Trallians *did* accept his view of office, of order and of the Church itself. In 7, 2 on the other hand he hinted at a different reality, *viz.* the presence in Tralles of Christians who chose to act apart from the deacons, the presbyters and bishop' (Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 29 [Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1992], 89). Such an interpretation of *Trall.* 7.2 is neither necessary nor warranted, as it seems more reasonable to conclude that Ignatius was concerned that the problems that he experienced in Antioch, the threats he witnessed in Philadephia, and the historic purging of 'antichrists' in Ephesus would have made him write warnings such as we find in *Trallians* even apart from any actual presence of separatists in that congregation.

narrative immediately played a central role in this letter: the death and resurrection of Christ with present and future implications for the Chrisitan life.

Ignatius first praised the church for the good news about their blameless disposition and patient endurance, which he received through their bishop, Polybius (1.1). Ignatius also praised God when he learned that the members of the church in Tralles were 'imitators of God' (1.2).[3] In what way were the Trallians 'imitators of God?' Ignatius explained it in *Trallians* 2.1: 'For when you are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, you appear to me to be living not according to human ways (κατὰ ἀνθρώπον) but according to Jesus Christ (κατὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν).'[4] In Ignatius's thinking, the standard of right living was Jesus Christ himself, 'who died for us in order that you may escape death by believing in his death' (*Trall.* 2.1). Ignatius thus exhorted them to continue to be submissive to the bishop and presbyters (2.2). In this context he also addressed the role of the deacons, who served not merely 'food and drink,' but the church of God. It is possible that the 'food and drink' as well as 'mysteries' of Jesus Christ referred to eucharistic worship (2.3).[5]

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[3] This may imply that some churches in the area were not imitators of God, but we cannot be sure that Ignatius had any specific knowledge of such negative conditions. Of course, had Ignatius not heard from any churches, he would have no basis to form an opinion about their states, and the unknown itself could generate worries. It may simply be that Ignatius had developed a fear for the churches after his experiences of opposition in Antioch and Philadelphia. So, when he said he was pleased to learn that they were a healthy church, we may not assume that all other churches were unhealthy.

[4] Some manuscripts read κατὰ ἀνθρώπους rather than κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, but the adopted reading is supported by the Greek witnesses (both long and short), the Coptic version, and John of Damascus. See Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 200.

[5] See Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres; Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th corrected ed., Sources chrétiennes, vol. 10 (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 96–97.

Next, as he did in both *Ephesians* and *Magnesians*, Ignatius drew parallels between the earthly, ecclesiastical order and the heavenly order. Everyone was to respect the deacons 'as Jesus Christ,' the bishop as 'a type of the Father,' and the presbyters 'as the council of God and as the college of apostles' (*Trall.* 3.1).[6] Then Ignatius claimed that without bishop, presbyters, and deacons, no group could be called a church. This suggests that at least from Ignatius's perspective the threefold office was universal among the churches.[7] Whether he was historically correct about this supposition is another matter. We can assume, however, that the Trallians at least agreed with Ignatius on the importance of this structure, for the same was apparently communicated to him by way of Polybius, the representative of the church in Tralles (3.2), as well as any other churches with which he corresponded during his episcopacy in Antioch and his travels through Asia Minor. He mentioned that the bishop was still with him, and by praising his demeanor Ignatius was perhaps attempting to increase respect for him. Ignatius then suggested that there were problems in Tralles that he could have addressed more sharply (3.3). We can only assume these issues had to do with the Trallians' failure to live up to the principle of submission to the ordained leadership, perhaps because of the bishop's personality.[8]

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[6] In *Magn.* 6.1, the similar image seems to have referred to the historical apostolic sending. In *Trall.* 3.1 this background cannot be established, as Ignatius did not maintain a consistent hierarchical scheme here. The issue, however, was 'respect,' and it may be that Ignatius was simply drawing on the similar concept of respecting earthly authorities as instituted by heavenly authorities—a form of exhortation we see in the New Testament as well (Eph 5:22; 6:5–8; Col 3:22–23).

[7] See William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 142.

[8] Ignatius suggested that the presence of Polybius was ministering to him at this time through 'gentleness' (πραότητος), for he stated earlier that Polybius's 'gentleness is power' (*Trall.* 3.2). In this way Ignatius attempted to elicit from the Trallians greater respect for their bishop. It may be that they felt he was too gentle and not bold enough and they were therefore in danger of being lured by more powerful personalities. With wandering

Ignatius then informed the Trallians that he was withholding some of the great 'heavenly' mysteries from them (*Trall.* 5.1–2). He contrasted his advanced understanding of the mysteries of God with their 'infant' understanding. Yet Ignatius said that for all this he was not yet a disciple (5.2). It may be that behind this argument lay a problem in Tralles in which some were attracted to the 'deeper knowledge,' perhaps something akin to early *gnosis* in which some teachers speculated on the invisible realm.[9] The immediate transition into a warning against false teachers in 6.1–11.2 also suggests this interpretation.

Ignatius urged the Trallians to 'use only Christian food, but stay far from strange vegetation, which is heresy (αἵρεσις)' (*Trall.* 6.1). He explicitly identified these people as deviating from a proper understanding of Jesus Christ: 'they mix Jesus Christ with themselves by feigning honesty' (6.2). Ignatius had reason to believe that the Trallians were threatened by false teachers who had somehow distorted the doctrine of Jesus Christ and seductively administered their teaching as if it were the truth. It is important to observe that Ignatius explicitly equated 'heresy' with a deviation from Jesus Christ, not simply insubordination or even a separation from the bishop, though both of these were often results—or causes—of christological heresy. Again, Ignatius's primary concern was for the purity of the incarnational narrative, which formed the center of catholic identity and set the boundaries between the true communities of faith and its imposters.

Ignatius thus exhorted the Trallians to be on their guard, to be humble rather than puffed up with pride. The solution to the

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false teachers on the prowl, such an attitude was dangerous in any church. Ignatius said that in his time of greatest need it was their bishop's gentleness that ministered to him the most: 'Therefore I need gentleness, by which the ruler of this age is destroyed' (*Trall.* 4.2).

[9] See Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, Yale Publications in Religion, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 230–31; Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Kari Syreeni, vol. 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 112.

problem of false teaching was to be 'inseparable from Jesus Christ and from the bishop and from the commandments of the apostle' (*Trall.* 7.1).[10] This devotion would save them from being led astray. Ignatius went even further, associating their membership within the community with purity and safety (7.2). Yet the whole context here is not that submitting to the hierarchy saves a person from error, but that the bishop, presbytery, and deacons were the ones who had the pure, unadulterated teaching about Jesus Christ and the commandments of the apostles. Deviating from their teaching or leaving the community would inevitably result in deviation from the truth about Jesus Christ. Thus, the exhortations to faithfulness to the community and submission to authority were in the interest of fidelity to the incarnational narrative, not the other way around.

Ignatius then clarified that he was not aware of this sort of thing among the Trallians, but that he was warning them in advance (*Trall.* 8.1). He probably heard of a tendency among the Trallians to disrespect their leadership. Drawing perhaps on his own experience in Antioch or in Philadelphia, Ignatius saw this tendency as an opportunity for Satan to offer up alternative views of Jesus outside the safe purview of the bishop and presbyters. Thus, Ignatius warned them that this deception often began by loose allegiance to the church: 'Therefore, taking on gentleness, you must strengthen yourselves with faith, which is the flesh of the Lord, and by love, which is the blood of Jesus Christ' (8.1).[11] Here faith and love (which are Ignatius's normal terms for inner and outer expressions of true Christian life) were linked conceptually with the body and blood of Christ (flesh and blood). He did not explicitly mention eucharistic worship, but the mention of flesh

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[10] The shorter Greek and Latin recensions as well as the Coptic version read θεοῦ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν and this reading is adopted in some critical texts (see Camelot, *Ignace, Polycarpe, Martyre de Polycarpe*, 100; Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 202). However, I find Schoedel's internal arguments against its inclusion weighty, and his warning against relying on this text 'in discussions of Ignatius' christology' should probably be heeded (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 147–48).

[11] See Camelot, *Ignace, Polycarpe, Martyre de Polycarpe*, 46; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 150.

and blood must have led both Ignatius and his readers to this association. In any case, we can be certain that Ignatius was linking a proper incarnational christology with a proper faith and love— what I have been calling faithfulness to the incarnational narrative in both belief and actions. This link points not merely to the present reality of Christ in the eucharist, but also to the historical reality of Christ's incarnation. It may be that in Ignatius's mind, the concepts of confession, eucharist, community, and Christ's presence intersect and overlap.

We see further evidence that the person and work of Christ stood at the center of Ignatius's concept of Christian self-definition and identity when Ignatius warned them about false teachers who spoke 'apart from Jesus Christ' (*Trall.* 9.1). In *Eph.* 6.2 Ignatius commended the Ephesians because they lived according to the truth, let no sect dwell among them, and refused to listen anyone who did not speak truthfully concerning Jesus Christ (περὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λαλοῦντος ἐν ἀληθείᾳ). In that context he shortly followed the warning about speaking falsely with a creedal summary reflecting elements of the incarnational narrative (*Eph.* 7.1–2). Similarly, here in *Trallians* 9.1, Ignatius instructed his readers to be deaf when someone spoke to them apart from Jesus Christ (κωφώθητε οὖν ὅταν ὑμῖν χωρὶς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λαλῇ τις), a statement which closely follows a warning about the dangerous poison of false teachers (6.1–2) and is immediately followed by another creedal summary. We should therefore take this as another example of 'truthful speech' concerning Christ, the standard against which all Christian teaching was to be measured.

It cannot be overemphasized that for Ignatius heresy and false teaching were always tied to the person of Christ and the reality of the incarnational narrative. Thus, Ignatius affirmed the proper understanding of Christ in *Trallians* 9.1–2:

> Who was from the family of David, who was from Mary; who was truly born and ate and drank, truly mistreated before Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died, while those in heaven and on earth and under the earth watched, who was also truly raised yo from those who are dead, when the father

raised him up, who—his Father—will also in similar manner
likewise raise us up in Christ Jesus, us who believe in him,
whichout whom we do no have true life.[12]

At this point the threat of a docetic heresy loomed in the
background of Ignatius's thought, though his warning appears to
have been anticipatory rather than addressing a then-current
reality.[13] It was the truth of the incarnation—the narrative
summarized in *Trallians* 9—for which Ignatius said he was willing
to die (*Trall.* 10).[14]

The seriousness of false teaching concerning Jesus Christ can
be seen in Ignatius's next statement: 'Therefore, flee the evil shoots
bearing deadly fruit, which if any may taste he will immediately die;
for these are not a planting of the Father' (*Trall.* 11.1).[15] Ignatius
contrasted these false branches with the true branches (11.2), which

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[12] For analsyses of this hymn, see Wilfred Franklin Bunge, 'The
Christology of Ignatius of Antioch' (Th.D. diss., Harvard University
Divinity School, 1966), 55–61; Martin Elze, 'Überlieferungsgeschichtliche
Untersuchungen zur Christologie der Ignatiusbriefe' [Ph.D. diss.,
Eberhard-Karls-Universität, 1963], 9–11; Henning Paulsen, *Studien zur
Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und
Dogmengeschichte, vol. 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978),
64–65; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 152–55.

[13] See Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 90.

[14] Interestingly, it appears that Ignatius's argument was one that
Christian apologists have used repeatedly of the apostolic martyrs—that
no martyr would give up his or her life to such torture and death for
something they knew to be a lie. In this case, Ignatius used himself as an
example (Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 118).

[15] The image is similar to Mt 15:13, associating false teachers with
weeds planted by Satan in opposition to God's true plants (see Camelot,
Ignace, Polycarpe, Martyre de Polycarpe, 102, but see other background images
in Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 156–57). The original image of the
'offshoot' (παραφυάς) reveals that in Ignatius's mind these false teachers
that denied the reality of the incarnation broke off from the main vine, the
true doctrine of Christ. The image from Matthew, however, suggests they
were separate plants that were made to look as if they were original, but
were, in fact, bad copies.

were firmly established in the message of the cross and found their life from the gospel of salvation through the death of Christ. Those who belonged to Christ were therefore members of him, and this union with Christ as the head then recalled Ignatius's admonition to remain within the physical body, the church. Ignatius came full circle, exhorting participation as not merely spiritual members of Christ, but physical members of the church. In Ignatius's thought, the physical and spiritual realms were united, and this was applied to membership in the local community under the unity of the bishop, presbyters, and deacon—which included unity with other members through faith and love around the rite of eucharistic worship. Ultimately, all of this led to doctrinal unity with the true teaching concerning Jesus Christ (*Trall.* 9). Thus, true Christian identity for Ignatius centered about and was founded upon the incarnational narrative of Jesus Christ vis-à-vis any competing 'gospels.' Isacson's comments on Ignatius's anti-docetic polemic in *Trall.* 6.1–11.2 is helpful here:

> To sum up, the Trallians are exhorted to follow Jesus Christ and to avoid the opponents. … Three rhetorical devices primarily support the exhortations. Describing the opponents, Ignatius uses *vituperation* and dissociation, e.g., they seem to be externally like Christ, but internally they are like poison. He also includes a *credo* in order to remind the addressees of the true faith and to convince them of the falseness of that of the opponents. As an argument to prove that Christ did really suffer, Ignatius refers to himself as a martyr *in spe.*

Ignatius's primary concern was not to establish or strengthen a threefold order as an end in itself, but he was using this as one means of many to defend his readers against the alternate, faulty christological claims of opponents—claims that transgressed the incarnational narrative that formed the basis of traditional confessional material (9.1–2).[16] In Ignatius's mind, then, it was faithfulness to the incarnational narrative that established authentic catholic identity. The structures of church order, unity, liturgy, and

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[16] Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 119.

creed supported this central and foundational mark of catholic Christianity.

From there Ignatius abruptly moved into his concluding greetings, hailing the Trallians from Smyrna. On the basis of his testimony for Jesus Christ as evidenced by his chains, he exhorted the Trallians to remain in unity with each other under their established leadership (*Trall.* 12.2). After a request for prayer and a final greeting from the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans (13.1), Ignatius once again exhorted them to love one another and remain subject to the bishop and presbyters (13.2).

RECEPTION BY THE TRALLIANS

Ignatius's exhortations for the Trallians to be united in love for one another and to be in submission to the bishop and presbyters were in the service of his overarching concern for their faithfulness to the incarnational narrative in both word and actions. Separation from the teaching of the bishop and disunity among the members inevitably led to heresy about Christ. Although Ignatius indicated that he was unaware of such heresy among them at the time of this writing (*Trall.* 8.1), he warned them nevertheless about the dangers of docetic christology, calling them to unity with each other and submission to the bishop as a precaution.

Figure 6: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's
Letter to the Trallians

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	
2) Incarnational union	*Trall.* 8.1
3) Birth and life	*Trall.* 9.1
4) Suffering and death	*Trall.* insc.; 2.1; 9.1; 10.1; 11.2
5) Bodily resurrection	*Trall.* 9.1
6) Heavenly assumption	

In sum, Ignatius's letter to the Trallians further illustrates that the incarnational narrative was central and foundational in Ignatius's theology and thought. It functioned as a presupposed axiom with

which his readers agreed and from which he could make arguments against those who spoke falsely about Christ and caused division. That Ignatius must have had some basis for expecting his audience in Tralles to accept his incarnational christology is indirectly supported by the fact that their bishop Polybius had visited Ignatius in Smyrna and explicitly communicated the general health of the church to Ignatius's satisfaction (*Trall.* 1.1–2). In Ignatius's mind—confirmed by Polybius—the Trallians were for the most part living 'in accordance with Jesus Christ' (2.1).

EXPOSITION OF *ROMANS*

Unlike the five churches of Asia Minor to which he wrote, Ignatius apparently knew the members and leadership of the church in Rome only by reputation.[17] Yet he did not hestitate to hail the Roman Christians with a high christology, calling Jesus 'our God' and greeting them 'in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the Father' (*Rom.* inscr.). Ignatius also said they were united in 'flesh and spirit' and suggested they were pure of any 'strange color,' extending greetings 'in Jesus Christ our God (τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν)'. Thus, Ignatius felt confident referring to Jesus Christ in terms of divine sonship and deity to a church with which he was apparently not personally acquainted. This suggests at the outset that Ignatius believed that 'catholic' Christianity as far away as Rome had embraced a high christology together with the incarnation—Jesus Christ as both θεός and σάρξ.

Based on his situation and destination, Ignatius saw that he would finally see the Roman Christians (*Rom.* 1.1), but he indicated that he did not want the church in Rome to interfere with his determination to give his life for Jesus Christ (1.2–2.2). Ignatius must have had reason to believe that some sort of Roman church

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[17] It may also be that Ignatius knew of other writings that he assumed originated in Rome, though it is unlikely, given his tone in *Rom.* 1.1, that Ignatius ever personally visited Rome (cf. Rom 1:10–12). We do know that Polycarp of Smyrna seems to have had more direct ties with Rome, including access to *1 Clem.* (see below, pp. 247–248). See Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 91.

intervention that would lessen his death sentence was possible.[18] Yet beyond this was Ignatius's expectation that they would actually desire to intervene, given the likely challenges and expenses involved in such a prospect. This suggests that Ignatius believed his reception by the Roman Christians would be positive. Because no organizational, personal, or social relationship existed between Ignatius and the Roman Christians, it may be that the fellowship that provided the basis for Ignatius's assumption was ecclesiological and confessional in nature. This is an initial indicator of the potential geographical extent of Ignatius's subjective vision of 'catholic' Christian identity centered on the incarnational narrative.

After stating that by his martyrdom his inner confession would be proved by outward action (*Rom.* 3.2) and that when he was invisible to the world he would be proved faithful, he wrote, 'Nothing [merely] visible is good' (3.3). Yet Ignatius's repeated emphasis on the visible, fleshly reality of the incarnation—even after the resurrection—and the Christians' hope of bodily resurrection (*Smyrn.* 2; 3.1–3) rules out taking this statement as a categorical philosophical assertion. We ought to take Ignatius's statement as one of degree; that is, one cannot claim something visible to be good until it has been proven to be so.[19] Christ has been proven to be who he claimed to be—'our God Jesus Christ'—because of his observable work. In the same way, Ignatius would prove to be a genuine Christian when he endured a similar fate through martyrdom (*Rom.* 3.3; cf. *Eph.* 14.2).

It is uncertain whether Ignatius's reference to 'all the churches' in *Rom.* 4.1 meant individual house communities under general leadership in Rome or all the churches within the general vicinity of Rome that were in communion with the recipients of Ignatius's letter. In any case, Ignatius's words should be taken quite literally: he was writing to 'all the churches,' addressing any Christians who might have received his letter prior to his arrival. Though debatable, this statement may give us an entrée into the

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[18] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 168–69.

[19] Ibid., 173–74.

ecclesiastical situation in the ancient world.[20] That is, it may indicate how Ignatius assumed the Roman church to be situated in relation to other local 'catholic' communities. Ignatius seems to have assumed that his letter would be dutifully copied or passed among distinct ἐκκλησίαι, not held by one lone ἐκκλησία. This may have been a reflection of Ignatius's own ecclesiastical situation in Antioch—revealing that the major apostolic church so prominent in Acts had under its headship several sister or daughter churches throughout Syria that were distinct from, yet in fellowship with, the original Antiochene church by the beginning of the second century.

Ignatius may have seen this same ecclesiastical pattern in Asia Minor, which allowed him to conclude that such a situation prevailed in the 'district of the Romans' (ἐν τόπῳ χωρίου Ῥωμαίων) (*Rom.* inscr.). If this was the case, then Ignatius may have been intentionally addressing a broader audience of local communities in close fellowship and communication with the catholic church of Rome. This might help to explain why he made no address to a single bishop or even presbyters. He may have intended to write a circular letter addressed to the regional church (as in Acts 9:31). In his letters to the smaller, individual communities in Ephesus, Smyrna, Magnesia, Philadelphia, and Tralles, those letters would have been sent to the smallest organization of Christians called a

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[20] I do not agree with Schoedel's interpretation that 'all the churches' refers to the churches in Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles—a reading that demands the conclusion that Ignatius both exaggerated and misrepresented what he had communicated to those churches (ibid., 175). It may be that γράφω suggests Ignatius's unrealized intention to write to a larger number of individual churches (Ign. *Pol.* 8.1; see Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, 2d edn, vol. 2 [London: Macmillan, 1889; reprint, New York: Olms, 1973], 206). However, Ignatius's admonition in *Rom.* 4.1 was to refrain from intervention, which could apply only to those churches in the region in which Ignatius's sentence was to be carried out. Thus, I understand Ignatius's reference to 'all the churches' to refer to those local congregations in the vicinity of Rome that might have had influence in such matters.

'church.' In that case an address to individual leaders would make more sense. However, when addressing the regional 'church' with individual 'communities,' such an address to an overarching leadership would have been inapplicable at that time. In any case, it appears that Ignatius took for granted a close-knit community of communities that would receive his letter favorably.

Ignatius insisted that all churches refrain from hindering the execution of his sentence and asked that he become food for the wild beasts (*Rom.* 4.1). Irenaeus of Lyons quoted this passage of Ignatius in *Adv. haer.* 5.28.4, prefaced with 'As a certain man of ours said (*Quemadmodum quidam de nostris dixit*).' Irenaeus's quotation of Ignatius's *Romans* and his endorsement of Ignatius as 'one of us' (*de nostris*), argues that the letter of Ignatius was, in fact, received by the church in Rome, preserved, and distributed to other churches, and even read widely beyond his death (see below, pp. 248–249). So, we may tentatively assume that the theology of the letter had been acceptable to the Roman Christians and those in the region who copied and preserved it. Had the high incarnational christology of the letter been offensive or unacceptable to Rome around 110 CE, it does not seem likely that it would have been so readily received by the Romans. Therefore, one may tentatively assume that the Roman communities addressed by Ignatius shared the same incarnational narrative received in Antioch and Asia Minor.

Though interesting in itself, Ignatius's passionate language of martyrdom must not waylay our study of his concept of catholic Christianity.[21] He asked that his readers pray that he would endure

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[21] For studies on Ignatius's desire for martyrdom, see Klaus Gunther Essig, 'Mutmassungen über den Anlass des Martyriums von Ignatius von Antiochien,' *Vigiliae christianae* 40 (1986): 105–17; John E. Lawyer, Jr., 'Eucharist and Martyrdom in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,' *Anglican Theological Review* 73 (1991): 280–96; Daniel Norman McNamara, 'Ignatius of Antioch on His Death: Discipleship, Sacrifice, Imitation' (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1978); Albert Osger Mellink, *Death as Eschaton: A Study of Ignatius of Antioch's Desire for Death* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2000); Kenneth R. Morris, '"Pure Wheat of God" or Neurotic Deathwish? A Historical and Theological Analysis of Ignatius of

the harsh execution by the wild beasts, prove to be a true disciple, and reach God (*Rom.* 4.2). Yet he followed this statement with the following comment: 'I do not give commands as Peter and Paul did' (4.3). With this statement Ignatius acknowledged that the apostolic authority of the previous generation was definitive, and that subsequent generations had only relative and derived authority.[22] Ignatius could therefore only teach and appeal to common standards believed to have already been established by the received apostolic witness. This makes his appeals to and arguments based on the incarnational narrative all the more important. Because he had no 'apostolic' authority, Ignatius would have appealed to standards of truth common to the churches to which he wrote. In Ignatius's writings this standard was a particular theology centered on a high incarnational christology and the narrative about Christ's work.

Ignatius then described his poor treatment in the custody of Roman soldiers, anticipating his looming death by literal wild beasts upon his arrival there (*Rom.* 5.1–2). Through this suffering, Ignatius said, he was 'beginning to be a disciple' (5.3), as he viewed his martyrdom as modeled after the example set by Christ himself, the standard of true discipleship. And twice Ignatius expressed his passionate desire to 'reach Christ' through suffering and death (5.3). Again, in *Romans* 6, Ignatius turned his attention to Jesus Christ, the unparalleled treasure who rendered all earthly prestige and riches meaningless: 'That one I seek, who died for us; that one I desire, who for us rose up' (*Rom.* 6.1). He thus pleaded with his

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Antioch's Zeal for Martyrdom,' *Fides et historia* 26 (1994): 24–41; Karin Bommes, 'Das Verständnis des Martyriums bei Ignatius von Antiochien' (Ph.D. diss., University of Regensburg, 1975); R. G. Tanner, 'Martyrdom in Saint Ignatius of Antioch and the Stoic View of Suicide,' *Studia patristica* 16, no. 2 (1985): 201–05; Michael J. Wilkins, 'The Interplay of Ministry, Martyrdom, and Discipleship in Ignatius of Antioch,' in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige, Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series, vol. 87 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), 294–315.

[22] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 176–77.

readers not to intervene, nor to tempt him with worldly desires, which in Ignatius's case probably meant the continuation of physical life (6.2). Instead, he urged them not to stand in the way of his imitation of 'the suffering of my God (τοῦ πάθους τοῦ θεοῦ μου)' (6.3).[23] The incarnate God, Jesus Christ, who suffered and rose again, was thus the manner, means, and goal of Ignatius's martyrdom. Thus, it is evident that Ignatius's christocentric understanding of martyrdom served as a confession of his faithfulness to the incarnational narrative.

In *Romans* 7.2–3, Ignatius said that his material desires had been crucified and quenched, so there were no longer selfish desires within him, but living water beckoning within him to 'come to the Father' (*Rom.* 7.2). Then, in 7.3 Ignatius noted, 'I do not take pleasure in corruptible food nor in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God (ἄρτον θεοῦ), which is the flesh of Christ, who is of the seed of David; and I desire as drink his blood, which is love incorruptible.'[24] A decision on whether Ignatius relied on the written Gospel of John for the language and imagery found in 7.2–3 is not necessary.[25]

Nearing the close of his letter, Igantius asked that the Romans not hinder his desire to die (*Rom.* 8.1). In support of his request, he wrote, 'Jesus Christ—the mouth who never lies, by whom the father has spoken truthfully—will reveal these things to you, that I am speaking truthfully' (*Rom.* 8.2). This christology, which sees Jesus as the mouth of God who reveals the Father, was also seen in

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[23] See the similarly shocking statement 'blood of God' in *Eph.* 1.1.

[24] See *Eph.* 20.2 and *Smyrn.* 7.1. The terminology is such that it seems likely that Ignatius intended a eucharistic association (see the use of ἀγάπη in *Smyrn.* 8.2). We must note that here Ignatius took the images in a confessional direction, which was perhaps his primary understanding of the eucharist.

[25] Because of the similarities between *Rom.* 7.2–3 and the Jn 4:10–11, 14; 6:33; and 7:38, some scholars have regarded this as strong evidence that Ignatius knew the Gospel of John (see Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004] 432–33; Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2.2*, 225). But see Paulsen, *Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien*, 36–37; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 185).

Magnesians 8.2, where Christ was called the 'word that proceeded from silence' as a metaphor for the revelatory sending of the Son by the Father.[26] Ignatius viewed Christ not only as God incarnate, but as the unique revealer of the Father.

Ignatius then asked his readers to remember the church in Syria in their prayers, affirming that the church in Antioch had God as its shepherd instead of him, alluding to his office of bishop, which was vacant in his absence. While he was gone, 'Jesus Christ alone will be its bishop' (*Rom.* 9.1). In 9.3, Ignatius's language suggests a bond of charity between the Asian churches and the church in Rome, another indication of the sense of fellowship among catholic communities that shared a common Christian confession. This close fellowship between Syria and Rome was further illustrated by Ignatius's words concerning those who preceded him (*Rom.* 10.2).

RECEPTION BY THE ROMANS

Based on this study, we can make a few tentative conclusions about the incarnational christology and 'catholic' Christianity in Rome. First, as in previous letters, Ignatius's letter to Rome reveals an incarnational christology that included the deity, fleshly humanity, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—all apart from polemical contexts against false teachers. This suggests that Ignatius not only appealed to the incarnational narrative in response to christological conflict, but that the incarnational narrative formed the center of Ignatius's positive Christian identity apart from polemics.

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[26] See *Magn.* 8.2, and the discussion above, pp. 102–104.

Figure 7: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's
Letter to the Romans

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Rom.* insc.; 3.3; 6.3
2) Incarnational union	*Rom.* 8.2
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Rom.* 6.1, 3
5) Bodily resurrection	*Rom.* 6.1
6) Heavenly assumption	

Second, in his casual use of specific incarnational terms, Ignatius presupposed that the incarnational narrative would have been received by the Roman Christians. At least from Ignatius's perspective, the catholic Christianity which he expected to find at Rome was marked by an incarnational christology by the early second century.

Third, because no ecclesiastical, personal, or social relationship appears to have existed between Ignatius and the Roman Christians, we may suspect that the fellowship that provided the basis for Ignatius's appeal was confessional in nature—a trans-geographical fellowship founded on a perceived common aspostolic teaching concerning Jesus Christ's person and work.

Fourth, the actual historical reception of Ignatius's letter by the Roman church and churches argues that they did, in fact, share in common the same basic incarnational narrative as Ignatius and the Asian churches (see above, p. 124). This will be discussed more thoroughly below, pp. 248–249.

CHAPTER 7. IGNATIUS TO THE PHILADELPHIANS

Prior to Ignatius's arrival in Smyrna, his party of Roman soldiers and fellow prisoners had halted briefly in Philadelphia some eighty miles to the east. However, it was not until after his departure from Smyrna and his arrival in the port city of Troas that Ignatius wrote a relatively harsh rebuke to the Philadelphian Christians along with his more positive exhortations to the Smyrnaeans and Polycarp. In his epistle to the Philadelphians, Ignatius urged church unity under the safety and security of the bishop, presbyters, and deacons (*Phld.* 1.1–2.2). Only by unity with the bishop's teachings and practices could they avoid the deception of false teachers (3.1–5.2). Ignatius specifically singled out the errors of Judaizers, describing his personal encounter with deceptive persons in Philadelphia, which resulted in a debate over biblical interpretation and culminated in a prophetic utterance calling for submission to the proper leadership in the church (6.1–9.2). Throughout his exposition, however, Ignatius returned to the center of his theology and source of his paraenesis and polemics—the incarnational narrative.

EXPOSITION OF *PHILADELPHIANS*

Ignatius began his letter to the church in Philadelphia by alleging that it enjoyed unity and harmony centered on right belief concerning the suffering of Christ and the resurrection. He greeted the church 'in the blood of Jesus Christ, which is eternal and permanent joy,' then added, 'especially if they are at one with the bishop and with the presbyters with him and deacons' (*Phld.* inscr.). Though he appears to have believed the majority of Christians in

Philadelphia were 'established in harmony of God,' his language suggests that there were some who were not completely at one with the ordained leadership.[1] Ignatius described this leadership as those 'appointed in the mind of Jesus Christ, which [presbyters], according to his own will, he strengthened by establishing by his Holy Spirit' (*Phld.* inscr.). Based on this statement, it would seem that Ignatius either suspected, was made aware of, or discovered by personal experience, a situation in Philadelphia in which certain people—perhaps influential people—had challenged the authority of the bishop, presbyters, and deacons.

Ignatius continued his thought concerning the establishment of the community-wide leadership of the bishop by asserting not only the role of the Son and Spirit, but also of the Father. The bishop received his ministry 'in the love of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (*Phld.* 1.1). Ignatius made a negative contrast, and we might suspect that the schismatics could have been characterized by trying to obtain a ministry by their own efforts through men and out of vanity. But by circumventing the ordained offices, they were trying to circumvent the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Ignatius then commended the patient endurance of the bishop (who apparently had to put up with unruly elements in the congregation): 'he is able to do more through silence than by speaking' (*Phld.* 1.1). It is difficult to reconstruct the situation based on these words alone, but it may be that the 'others' who talked vainly was a reference to the schismatics, who wooed people away from the bishop.[2] Ignatius commended the bishop's gentle

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[1] See Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Kari Syreeni, vol. 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 126; Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 29 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1992), 95–97.

[2] Isacson's caution, however, must be heeded: 'We cannot say who those persons might be, or what they talk about. Nor do we know whether or not they are actual, historical persons; they could be fictitious and mentioned only in order to emphasize the silence of the local bishop'

approach over that of 'the others' and followed up with a flattering description of the bishop in question (1.2). Thus, we may conclude that Ignatius had no essential theological disputes with the bishop of Philadelphia, nor with the presbyters and deacons.

Yet Ignatius bluntly exhorted the Christians in Philadelphia to 'flee from the division and the evil teachings (φεύγετε τὸν μερισμὸν καὶ τὰς κακοδιδασκαλίας)' (*Phld.* 2.1). We cannot immediately conclude that division and false teaching were present within the community, but only that Ignatius viewed these things as real threats.[3] We do not know the nature of the division, nor do we know what kinds of 'evil teachings' were being disseminated, though Ignatius seemed to link these two together. Isacson notes, 'Strictly speaking, there are two themes: to flee division and to refrain from false teachings, but they are intertwined and can only be separated with difficulty. Nevertheless … the theme of false teachings is the superior one.'[4] In any case, the solution to both divisions and bad teaching was submission to the bishop: 'Where the shepherd is, there follow as sheep' (2.1).[5] By the congregation's unity with the bishop, the 'many pretentious wolves' would not succeed in taking captive the runners of God's race (2.2).[6] Again, it is unclear whether Ignatius was speaking at the level of abiding

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(Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 128).

[3] The presence of the articles for both division and wicked teaching could suggest that Ignatius had a specific, real schism and false teaching in mind, which he knew had been present in the Philadelphian church. However, this is not demanded by the use of the article. In fact, in his letter to Polycarp, Ignatius warned him to 'flee the evil arts' (*Pol.* 5.1), though one would hardly conclude that Ignatius suspected his fellow bishop of witchcraft!

[4] Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 130.

[5] Howell acknowledges that this could refer to Christ as the chief shepherd (Kenneth J. Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna: A New Translation and Commentary*, rev. and exp. edn [Zanesville, OH: CHResources, 2009], 123).

[6] See the similar prescription for combating christological error in *Eph.* 6.2.

principles or if he had specific false teachers in mind. Either way, he viewed the threat to be real and imminent.

Whereas the λύκοι in *Philadelphians* 2.2 pictured an active, external threat luring runners away, the image of 3.1 was that of an internal 'plant,' apparently dwelling in the midst of the congregation itself. These 'evil plants' were 'not cultivated by Jesus Christ.' That is, they were not cared for in the field by Christ because 'they are not the planting of the Father' (3.1). In *Trallians* 6.1, the 'strange plant' (βοτάνης ἀπέχεσθε) refers to 'heresy,' and in *Trallians* 11.1, those weeds that were not of the Father's planting refers to a docetic christology. Ignatius argued that these pretenders were not genuine Christians and therefore caused divisions (3.2). In contrast, the harmonious work of the Father and Jesus Christ was evident in every instance of the true Christian's initial conversion and spiritual growth under the submission of the bishop and care of the community.

Ignatius then revealed the situation in Philadelphia as he perceived it. When he visited the congregation earlier in his journey, he discovered that divisions had existed, but he also learned (if the verb is distributive) that the schism had been resolved through 'purification' (ἀποδιϋλισμόν) (*Phld.* 3.1). The solution was not by restoration of fellowship, but by expulsion or perhaps a departure of the troubling elements. Yet Ignatius warned his readers, 'Do not be deceived, my brothers: if anyone is following a schismatic, he will not inherit the kingdom of God' (3.3). Furthermore, schismatics who departed from the authority of the bishop and unity of the church by embracing false teachings demonstrated that they were not of the Father, would not inherit the kingdom of God, and were separate from the benefits of the passion of Christ (3.3).

Ignatius, not surprisingly, associated the passion of Christ, unity of the church, adherence to true teaching, and submission to the bishop, to eucharistic worship: 'Do your best, therefore, to enact one eucharist' (*Phld.* 4.1). The one eucharist is significant, as there was 'one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup for unity of his blood; one altar, just as one bishop, together with the

presbytery and deacons, my fellow servants.'[7] When the Philadelphians rightly participated in the eucharist as a confession of the incarnational narrative and affirmation of ecclesiastical and doctrinal unity, they were acting 'in accordance with God.'

Ignatius next asserted that because of his great love for the Philadelphians, he was looking after their safety as a representative of Jesus Christ, for whose sake he was in chains and sentenced to die.[8] Yet he eagerly desired their prayers to God that he would be

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[7] The eucharistic theme of unity in the congregation is also seen in the prescribed eucharistic prayer in *Did.* 9.4. Only the baptized of the community were to be admitted to the eucharist (*Did.* 9.5), and the physical 'food and drink' were closely associated with 'spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through your servant' (10.3) and with a petition to the Father to remember the church (10.5–6).

[8] In his rhetorical analysis, Isaacson suggests that Ignatius was establishing a strong *ethos* with his addressees and notes, 'Such a platform would be essential if we assume that the opponents are part of the addressees, and Ignatius does therefore probably not write more than his opponents can agree to' (Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 135). On this point, Isacson seems to follow Schoedel (William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 207, cf. Trevett, *Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 92–99). However, we must consider Ignatius's strong language against the actual opponents in this letter, especially *Phld.* 3.1; 3.2; 6.1; and 7.1. If these third person referents are the actual opponents, it seems unlikely that he was tailoring his argument toward them, but rather attempting to protect members of the church in Philadelphia from the influence of those he perceived to be his opponents, who were not part of his intended addressees. Both Schoedel and Isacson seem to be confusing Ignatius's warning against adopting certain dangerous activities with an exhortation to cease engaging in these activities. Never did Ignatius urge the Philadelphians to 'cease' or 'refrain' from any actions, but rather to 'stay away from' (*Phld.* 3.1), 'do not be misled' (3.3), and 'do not listen' (6.1). He urged them to 'flee' the wrong way and 'follow' the right (2.1), noting, that many 'pretentious wolves' had tried to capture the runners of God's race (2.2). Thus, his addressees were those whom he feared would fall under the seduction of the opponents, not the opponents themselves.

made 'perfect' through martyrdom. He was assured of his fate because he had 'fled to the gospel as the flesh of Jesus and to the apostles as the presbytery of the church' (*Phld.* 5.1). Brown notes, 'The flesh of Jesus is a synonym for the εὐαγγέλιον; it thus suggests the historical events of salvation that occurred in the past, and—through the eucharist—exist in the present church as well.'[9] The analogies (not synonyms) of the gospel with the flesh of Jesus and the apostles with the presbytery (see *Mag.* 6.1; 7.1; *Trall.* 2.2; 3.1) may suggest that Ignatius regarded the apostles as the 'presbytery' of the 'catholic' church—whose teachings were authoritative for all local churches throughout the world (as in *Eph.* 11.2; *Magn.* 13.1; *Trall.* 3.3; 7.1; *Rom.* 4.3). In this case, extending the first analogy from the local eucharistic worship—as the local church's confessional reenactment of the gospel—Ignatius may have held the εὐαγγέλιον—the incarnational narrative itself—to be the authoritative message of the 'catholic' church.

Though Ignatius was primarily making reference to the authoritative message of the gospel and the teachings of the apostles, by extension he must have had in mind any written forms in which these were available in Ignatius's day. All four of the canonical gospels had been written down by Ignatius's time, and regardless of whether Ignatius cited any of these, it seems to me to exceed the bounds of tolerable skepticism (or reasonable objectivity) to imagine that the bishop of Antioch would have been unaware of any of them. That he knew of written documents by at least Paul is undisputed (*Eph.* 12.2). Though commentators are probably correct in noting that the message, teachings, or narratives passed down from the apostles were of primary concern for Ignatius, it is unlikely that Ignatius would have separated the oral message from the written documents with which he was familiar.[10]

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[9] Charles Thomas Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, Studies in Biblical Literature, vol. 12 (New York: Lang, 2000), 15.

[10] The opinion that Ignatius had the gospel message in mind when he used the word εὐαγγέλιον is overwhelmingly supported by commentators (Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 17–18; Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres; Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th corrected ed., Sources chrétiennes, vol. 10 [Paris: Cerf, 1998],

Thus, Ignatius could move immediately into a discussion of the prophets of the Old Testament: 'And the prophets we love, too, because they also directed attention to the gospel and hoped on him and waited for him' (*Phld.* 5.2). The argument behind this assertion was that because the writers of the Old Testament anticipated Christ, the writings of the prophets must be interpreted in light of Jesus. Here Ignatius carefully set up his argument that Christ himself was the center and standard of interpretation for the Old Testament writings, which would be further expanded in 8.2.

Ignatius also said that the prophets of the Old Testament 'believed in him' and 'were saved' (*Phld.* 5.2).[11] Thus, Christ constituted the unifying center of both the Old Testament saints (the prophets), and the New Testament saints (apostles). As such, he was the unifier, center, and source of life and hope for all ages. Ignatius did not find the need to defend these assertions either with Scripture, appeals to traditional teachings, or any other arguments. Rather, he treated the unity of the people of God in the person of Christ as an axiom, upon which he then drew practical implications regarding the treatment of Old Testament texts in light of the incarnational narrative: 'But if anyone proclaims Judaism to you, do not heed him' (6.1). That is, because the Old Testament prophets anticipated and then believed in Jesus, they were now counted among the church; Judaism as a religion had nothing more to offer.

124; Henning Paulsen, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 2. neubearbeitete ed., vol. 2, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 18 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985], 83; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 201).

[11] See parallels in *Magn.* 8.2; 9.2. Ignatius may have held that the prophets and saints of the Old Testament period believed in Christ upon his descent to the place of the dead, whereby he took these saints with him to heaven. Ignatius could then say that the Old Testament saints had to believe in Jesus and become part of the church in order to be saved, so that they were now part of the same spiritual unity as living and dead saints of the New Testament. This explanation would make good sense of Ignatius's entire statement in *Phld.* 5.2. See Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. J. A. Baker (Chicago: Regnery, 1964), 233–48; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 124.

Ignatius added that it is better to learn Christianity from a Jew (thus demonstrating the superiority of Christianity as supplanting Judaism) than Judaism from a Gentile (one who holds to Jewish religious teachings, but who was not a physical Jew) (*Phld.* 6.1).[12] Ignatius's point was that regardless of who was doing the teaching, Christ was still the standard of legitimate instruction (6.1). As in *Ephesians* 6.2 and *Trallians* 9.1, teaching concerning Jesus Christ (περὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) was the standard by which a person was regarded as a genuine Christian. These statements asserting the centrality of Christ formed the basis for Ignatius's exhortation: 'Therefore, flee the deception and plot of the ruler of this age, lest being troubled by his purpose, you will be weakened in love. Rather, all of you be near one another with an undivided heart' (*Phld.* 6.2). Deviation from speaking accurately about Christ was therefore regarded as schismatic and Satanic in origin—the critical point of departure for heresy.

In *Philadelphians* 6.3, Ignatius revealed that during his visit in Philadelphia he had rebuked some people, for whom he prayed. There appears to have been a particular group in Philadelphia that Ignatius had in mind—and with whom his addressees were familiar. Ignatius said that certain people (τινες) wanted to deceive him (ἠθέλησαν πλανῆσαι) 'according to the flesh' (κατὰ σάρκα) (7.1). The deception centered on that group's feigned fidelity to the ordained leadership and perhaps to Ignatius himself.[13] In response to this deception, Ignatius responded, 'The Spirit is not deceived, being from God; because he knows from where he comes and where he goes, and he exposes things hidden' (7.1). Ignatius then claimed to have had special revelation by the Spirit regarding the

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[12] See Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 204–06. The 'circumcised' to which Ignatius referred may be the prophets and original Jewish apostles, though Jewish Christian teachers in Philadelphia may also be in view (see Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 184).

[13] See discussion in Thomas A. Robinson, *The Bauer Thesis Examined: The Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 11 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 191–95.

true nature of the situation that exposed the schismatics' secrets (τὰ κρυπτά): 'I shouted out while there; I was speaking in a loud voice, in the voice of God, "Pay attention to the bishop and to the presbytery and deacons"' (7.1).

This account of the event in Philadelphia marks a rare example in which Ignatius appealed not to a christological analogy in support of his view of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, but to a prophetic utterance.[14] He said this was the 'voice of God' (*Phld.* 7.1). Yet Ignatius appealed to the authority of his special prophetic utterance not to establish or strengthen the threefold office, but to explain how he knew of the secret schism that had been hidden from him by the deceivers. He even said that after he uttered these words by the prophetic power of God, some among the Philadelphians suspected that he had said this because he he had advanced knowledge of the divisions (7.2). In response, Ignatius virtually swore by Christ that his knowledge came by the Spirit, adding, 'The Spirit himself was proclaiming, saying these things: "Do nothing without the bishop. Guard your flesh as the temple of God. Love unity. Flee divisions. Be imitators of Jesus Christ, as he is of his Father"'(7.2).

Thus, Ignatius recounted six distinct statements that he attributed to the Holy Spirit's prophetic utterance,[15] all of which he reiterated in some form in the letters he wrote after this event:

1. Pay attention to the bishop and to the presbytery and deacons.[16]

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[14] Franz Joseph Dölger, '"Gottes-Stimme" bei Ignatius von Antiochien, Kelson und Origenes,' in *Antike und Christentum: kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, ed. Franz Joseph Dölger, vol. 5 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1976), 218–23; Peter Meinhold, *Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, vol. 97 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), 8–10; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 205–6.

[15] Vall suggests the utterance of *Phld.* 7.2 is 'arranged in three rhyming couplets' (Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2013], 57).

[16] *Pol.* 6.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1.

2. Do nothing without the bishop.[17]

3. Guard your flesh as the temple of God.[18]

4. Love unity.[19]

5. Flee divisions.[20]

6. Be imitators of Jesus Christ, as he is of his Father.[21]

Ignatius's recalling of his prophetic utterance to the Philadelphians can be regarded as self-authenticating.[22] The accuracy and appropriateness of the exhortation was not at issue for his original audience, but the source or motivation for it was. Because Ignatius had visited Philadelphia before he composed the letters to Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Romans, we might speculate that the exhortations we find in these letters that were similar to the prophetic utterances he had experienced in Philadelphia had their roots in that event. This helps explain why he felt it necessary to warn these congregations in advance of schism and to strengthen their faithfulness to the bishop, even apart from actual false teaching and heresy among them at the time.

However, in all this we find no indication that Ignatius's christology itself was the subject of divine prophetic utterance. In fact, in his messages to other churches, Ignatius appealed more to the incarnational narrative to ground his ecclesiology and ethic than he did to his prophetic utterance, which is found only in the letter to the Philadelphians. It may be that in the mind of Ignatius, the christological arguments for the authority of the bishop, the unity of the church, and the rejection of false teaching were stronger than a prophetic appeal.[23]

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[17] *Trall.* 7.2; *Smyrn.* 8.1; 8.2.

[18] *Eph.* 15.3.

[19] *Magn.* 1.2; 13.2; *Phld.* 8.1; *Pol.* 1.2.

[20] *Phld.* 2.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1.

[21] *Eph.* 10.3; *Rom.* 6.3.

[22] On the concept of 'self-authenticating' statements in Ignatius, see above, p. 60.

[23] It may be that Ignatius already relayed this story and the content

Ignatius then said that he was attempting to bring about unity, which suggests the problem in Philadelphia was not so much christological, but one in which the divisions could realistically be mended (*Phld.* 8.1). He exhorted the faithful believers of Philadelphia to do nothing with an attitude of contension, but 'according to the teaching of Christ (ἀλλὰ κατὰ χριστομαθίαν)' (8.2). This χριστομαθίαν refers not to teachings by Christ, but teachings about Christ—the body of doctrine that formed the standard by which unity was achieved, that is, the incarnational narrative.[24] This interpretation is verified by Ignatius's statement, 'Because I heard certain ones saying, "If I do not find it in the archives, I do not believe it in the gospel"' (8.2).[25]

What was the nature of the Philadelphian debate? Given the immediately preceding exhortation to do all things 'according to the teaching of Christ,' we may reasonably assume that the matter related to the proper standard of doctrine. The problem was not exegetical but hermeneutical.[26] The situation appears to have been one in which certain people placed priority on their traditional reading of the Old Testament—the 'archives' (ἀρχείοις).[27] The term

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of his Philadelphian prophecy to representatives of other churches in person rather than in writing, but he did not mention this in any of the letters.

[24] See Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 16, 158–59.

[25] Though likely, we cannot be absolutely certain this group was the same as those who secretly caused the divisions described earlier.

[26] See John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 27–28.

[27] See William R. Schoedel, 'Ignatius and the Archives,' *Harvard Theological Review* 71 (1978): 97–106. I do not find at all convincing the interpretation that Ignatius was pitting oral tradition against written texts, as Wilken suggests: 'For Ignatius, the only real "authority" was Jesus Christ, not a written scripture' (see Robert L. Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012], 42). There is nothing in Ignatius's writings that suggest he valued oral teaching over written texts. In fact, we must remember that it was Ignatius himself who said to his opponents, γέγραπται!

'gospel' then refers to the incarnational narrative concerning the person and work of Christ. It was the hermeneutical priority of this message that the challengers were questioning.[28]

Ignatius had reportedly attempted to argue some point based on the Old Testament writings: 'When I was saying to them, "It is written" (γέγραπται).' However, his debaters challenged his interpretation. They answered, 'That matter lies before us' (πρόκειται) (*Phld.* 8.2).[29] Behind this truncated account we may assume that a more lengthy debate took place,[30] but Ignatius cut to the end result—the opponents claimed their reading of the Old Testament was the ultimate standard of Christian doctrine. Ignatius apparently attempted to oblige their presuppositions by showing what the Old Testament said. However, they doubted or questioned his method or manner of interpretation. Ignatius's famous response suggests impatience: 'But for me, Jesus Christ is the "archives," the inviolable archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which is through him' (8.2).

This brief statement summarizing the key elements of the work of Christ constituted the heart of Ignatius's 'gospel,' and, in

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[28] Zetterholm reads into this debate the divisive concept of Gentile conversion to Christ apart from Judaism (Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 209). My own exposition suggests that for Ignatius the issue was primarily one of authority—a traditional Jewish reading of the 'archives' or a christocentric reading.

[29] Most translators follow this general rendering of πρόκειται. Holmes translates it 'that is precisely the question' (Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, 2d rev. edn [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 181). Similarly, Schoedel has 'That is just the question' (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 207). Camelot renders it, 'C'est là la question' (Camelot, *Ignace, Polycarpe, Martyre de Polycarpe*, 129). And Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 223 have 'Das eben ist die Frage.' See Walter Bauer et al., eds, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. πρόκειμαι.

[30] Vall, however, reads the account as evidence of Ignatius's abrupt, one-word response to his critics: 'It is written' (Vall, *Learning Christ*, 29).

fact, described the content of the χριστομαθίαν according to which Ignatius asked the Philadelphians to act (*Phld.* 8.2). Once again, we see that for Ignatius the central, unifying theology and standard for all beliefs and actions was the incarnational narrative—the suffering, death, and resurrection—though more specific incarnational language awaits discussion in 9.2. Beyond this, however, the narrative concerning Christ served as a virtual hermeneutical principle by which written texts were to be interpreted.[31] As such, it was the predecessor to the later—and more detailed—'rule of faith,' which shared these similar elements and centered on Christ's person and work.[32]

Still seeking to engage the Judaizing schismatics, Ignatius entered into a brief discussion about the relationship of the Old Testament saints and the gospel (*Phld.* 9). He acknowledged that the priests of the old era were good, but the High Priest—Jesus Christ—was 'better' or 'superior' (as in Heb 4:14–5:10). Only Christ was entrusted with the 'hidden things of God' (*Phld.* 9.1); he was 'the door of the Father' (see John 10:9); and through him all

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[31] Brown is correct when he writes, 'Hence, the exchange between Ignatius and his opponents begins with opposing interpretations of the OT scriptures. It is clear, however, that the discussion—at least for Ignatius—could go no further: each side could support its position with texts' (Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 17). However, Brown's suggestion that he bypassed the hermeneutic impasse 'by distancing himself' form the Old Testament seems to go too far: 'For Ignatius, then, the only archives necessary, as the foundational information for the church, are not found in written documents but are the historical facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus' (ibid., 18). It seems best to see this not as an issue of scriptural authority but of hermeneutical authority, anticipating to some degree the similar arguments that would be made by later fathers in their appeals to the 'rule of the faith' or 'canon of the truth' applied to the reading of both Old and New Testament writings. It was not the authority of the writings themselves that was in question, but the standard by which they were read.

[32] Thus, I agree with Howell, who suggests that 'faith' in *Phld.* 8.2 'may very well be *fides quae creditor*, i.e., the objective content of the faith' (*Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 126).

the Old Testament patriarchs, prophets, and New Testament apostles and saints gain entrance to the unity of God (*Phld.* 9.1). Thus, Jesus Christ constituted the center and means of salvation, not merely in the present age, but in every age.

Still relating the Old Testament saints and prophets to the 'gospel' message, Ignatius wrote, 'But the gospel has something remarkable—the coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his suffering, and the resurrection. For the beloved prophets directed a proclamation toward him, but the gospel is the completion of immortality. All these together are good, if you believe with love' (*Phld.* 9.2). So, both the Old Testament prophets and the accounts of the apostles and prophets centered on the narrative about Jesus Christ. By the phrase 'coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ' Ignatius referred to the coming of the Son in the incarnation.[33] Ignatius's point was that Christ was not only the center and foundation of Christian identity and theology, but Christians must also employ a christological hermeneutic in conformity with the incarnational narrative.[34] Schoedel notes: 'Ignatius is stressing the fact that for all practical purposes the christological understanding of Scripture suffices. What the prophets announced has in fact appeared. The Christ has come. Preoccupation with Scripture from other points of view is irrelevant.'[35] Ignatius's emphasis on a Christ-centered hermeneutic was thus the source of his polemic against those who interpreted Scripture apart from the christological center.

Moving into the closing remarks of his letter, Ignatius informed the Philadelphians that the church in Antioch had been

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[33] Paulsen notes, 'Nur bezeichnet παρουσία hier die Inkarnation, die "erste Ankunft" des Herrn' (Henning Paulsen, *Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, vol. 29 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978], 66).

[34] Pío-Gonçalo Alves de Sousa, 'Jesucristo, centro de la escritura y tradición: un principio hermenéutico en Ignacio de Antioquía,' in *Biblia y hermenéutica: VII simposio internacional de teología de la Universidad de Navarra, 10–12 abril 1985*, ed. José María Casciaro (Pamplona: University of Pamplona, 1986), 625–35.

[35] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 211.

restored to peace, and he urged them to send a deacon as an ambassador for God to officially commend them for their reconciliation and peace (*Phld.* 10.1). Ignatius further encouraged this act by informing his readers that other neighboring churches had sent 'bishops, and others presbyters and deacons' (10.2). In these requests we catch a glimpse of the network of local Christian communities in fellowship with one another, which broader community Ignatius would call the 'catholic' church. In this same vein, we must not overlook Ignatius's various personal greetings as we explore the nature and extent of his concept of catholic Christianity. One of his companions, Philo, came from Cilicia, and enjoyed a 'good reputation' (11.1). Also with him was Rhaius Agathopus, who accompanied Ignatius from Syria. These two apparently stayed behind or returned to visit the church in Philadelphia after Ignatius departed, and they spoke well of the church. However, Ignatius made a distinction between those who received them and the party of dissenters in Philadelphia: 'But may the ones who dishonored them be ransomed by the grace of Jesus Christ' (11.1).[36] Ignatius, writing from Troas, sent greetings from that church in love (11.2), a further indication of the extent of Ignatius's personal reception and the fellowship between churches in western Asia. They not only received Ignatius, but also acknowledged the Philadelphian church. Ignatius sent this letter through Burrhus, who, we recall, had come from Ephesus and was supported by finances from the Smyrnaeans (*Smyrn.* 12.1). This provides a clearer picture of the geographical extent of fellowship between local churches—Antioch, Philadelphia, Cilicia, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Troas.

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[36] Apparently, Ignatius regarded the error of the dissenters as redeemable, as he engaged in no severe or harsh criticisms or rebukes and did not use the terms 'heresy' or 'false teaching' to describe their error. It is interesting that there were no indications of gross rejection of essential christological assertions for which Ignatius was famous. It appears that the problems in Philadelphia related to bucked authority, interpretational disputes, and Judaizing tendencies that all had the potential of unraveling into heresy if such schismatics followed false teachers.

RECEPTION BY THE PHILADELPHIANS

Though it is not as fully developed as in *Ephesians* or *Magnesians*, the incarnational narrative of a true fleshly existence, suffering, death, and bodily resurrection plays a central part in establishing Christian identity. This is especially true in contrast with the false teachers in Philadelphia who apparently doubted the validity of the incarnate Son of God as the hermeneutical center of Christian theology.

Figure 8: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's *Letter to the Philadelphians*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	
2) Incarnational union	*Phld.* 4; 5.1
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Phld.* insc.; 8.2; 9.2
5) Bodily resurrection	*Phld.* insc.; 8.2; 9.2
6) Heavenly assumption	

Based on this reading of *Philadelphians*, we can extrapolate several important things about second century incarnational christology and early catholic Christianity. First, we see that his incarnational narrative not only formed the center of Ignatius's theology, but it was the source of his hermeneutic (*Phld.* 8.2). This seems to foreshadow a fuller expression of the 'rule of faith' that would aid in combating non-catholic interpretations of Scripture later in the second century. For Ignatius to appeal to the 'gospel' suggests that the incarnational narrative was not a subject of debate but a shared presupposition among catholic Christians.

Second, we can conclude that this brief statement summarizing the key elements of the work of Jesus Christ not only constituted the heart of Ignatius's 'gospel,' but, in fact, described the content of the χριστομαθίαν according to which Ignatius asked the Philadelphians to act (*Phld.* 8.2). Because Ignatius used the term 'Christianity' (Χριστιανισμός) to contrast with 'Judaism' and referred to those who expounded (ἑρμηνεύω) one or the other, we see that Ignatius viewed the content of this narrative as establishing

community identity. That is, Χριστιανισμός was necessarily delimited by χριστομαθίαν. This evidence is in line with the thesis that for Ignatius faithfulness to the incarnational narrative defined catholic Christianity.

Third, Ignatius appears to have had a good relationship with the leadership of Philadelphia, and the small schismatic group in that city appears to have been driven by a Judaizing force that affected their biblical interpretation and rebellion against the ordained leadership, not necessarily their christological understanding (though we cannot exclude this). When Ignatius did warn of gross doctrinal errors, they appear to be warnings of potential threats that should be avoided, not actual existing errors to be removed.

Fourth, his mention of several individuals from as far as Syria indicates that the churches at the time enjoyed relatively close relationships in spite of the great distances between them (*Phld.* 11.2). Because of the personal presence of the representatives with Ignatius, this must be taken as more than wishful thinking. Something seems to have united these believers and churches in a common Christian identity. As far as Igantius was concerned, that something was faithfulness to the incarnational narrative.

In sum, in Ignatius's letter to the church in Philadelphia, we find further evidence that Christian identity centered on a clear incarnational narrative. This christology was the source of his polemic against a deviant hermeneutic that failed to regard this narrative as the norming center of biblical interpretation.

CHAPTER 8. IGNATIUS TO THE *SMYRNAEANS* AND TO *POLYCARP*

Besides the letter to Philadelphia, Ignatius sent two more letters from Troas to Smyrna, where he had recently stayed under the care of the bishop Polycarp and in the company of the leadership from Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles.[1] One of these letters addressed the local church in Smyrna as a whole while the other primarily addressed Polycarp along with the rest of the leadership in the

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[1] Jefford suggests that only the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia were written in Troas, while the personal letter to Polycarp was sent from Neapolis, apparently relying on Ignatius's statement in *Pol.* 8.1 (Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006], 11). Ignatius stated that he was unable to write to all the churches as he had intended 'because of my unexpected sailing from Troas to Neapolis, as the will commands.' Though this language could be understood as indicating that the voyage from Troas to Neapolis took place in the recent past, this seems unlikely, as Ignatius used the aorist tense to indicate that he was unable to write to all the churches (οὐκ ἠδυνήθην), then used the present active infinitive to refer to his sailing to Neapolis (πλεῖν) and the present active indicative in reference to the 'order' or 'command' responsible for the sudden departure (προστάσσει)—a reference to the will of either God or the Romans. It seems the brevity and urgency of the letter to Polycarp suggests that he was writing under the pressure of an imminent departure. At any rate, had Ignatius already arrived in Neapolis, it seems he would have used the aorist form of προστάσσω to indicate a past command to depart rather than the present active indicative, suggesting a command that was still in operation and which they were about to fulfill.

church.[2] The letter to the Smyrnaeans presents a full, rich, and profound expression of the incarnational narrative, similar to that found in *Ephesians* but in some ways even surpassing its grandeur. The letter of Polycarp, on the other hand, reads more like a personal note of pastoral coaching, encouraging the famous bishop to press on in his ministry for the sake of his flock. In both cases Ignatius emphasizes the need for distinguishing Christian truth from error and the necessity of harmony and humility.

EXPOSITION OF *SMYRNAEANS*

Already in the opening words of the letter to the church in Smyrna Ignatius exhibited his high christology: 'I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you wise' (*Smyrn.* 1.1), a statement which he followed with his observation that the Smyrnaean church had been 'established in an unshakable faith.' As one would expect, the content of this 'unshakable faith' centered on the person and work of Christ, illustrated by the metaphor of being firmly nailed to the cross of Christ. They were also firmly established in love by the blood of Christ:

> Fully assured regarding our Lord being truly (ἀληθῶς) of the family of David according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα), Son of God according to the will and power [of God] (κατὰ θέλημα καὶ [θεοῦ] δύναμιν), truly born from a virgin, baptized by John in that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him, truly nailed for us in the flesh by Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch. (*Smryn.* 1.1–2)

These statements represent an expanded version of what Ignatius referred to as 'the gospel' in *Philadelphians* 8. Like the 'rule of faith' later in the second century, the 'gospel' for Ignatius was an expression of the content of the incarnational narrative; it had not been reduced to a simple formula. So, we find in this summary statement not only reminiscences of traditions found in written

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[2] See comments on the addressees of *Pol.* 6.1–7.1 below, p. 161, n. 27.

gospel accounts but also elements from Paul's own gospel summary (Rom 1:1–4).

Ignatius described the benefits of the work of Christ on the cross thusly: 'from which fruit we are, from his suffering blessed by God ' (*Smyrn.* 1.2). He then expressed in more explicit detail the benefits of the resurrection of Christ, who was crucified 'in order that he might take up a for the ages through the resurrection for his saints and faithful ones, whether among Jews or among Gentiles, in one body of his church' (1.2). Like the Pauline use in Ephesians 2:16, here Ignatius used the term ἐκκλησία in its universal (or 'catholic') sense—the one body of Christ consisting of all believers throughout the world.[3] Ignatius therefore regarded this incarnational narrative as constituting the essence of catholic Christianity—the teaching concerning Christ's person and work on which Ignatius believed the worldwide body of Christ agreed.

Ignatius insisted that 'he truly suffered, as also he truly raised himself,' and contrasted this with the statements of ἄπιστοί τινες) who said 'he appeared to suffer' (*Smyrn.* 2.1). We must note that Ignatius intended to relay something people actual said. We do not know if Ignatius had heard this statement first hand or if it had been reported to him by others. Nor can we tell at this point whether Ignatius knew of such a docetic confession among or around the Smyrnaean community itself. Either way, Ignatius had no tolerance for them, saying that their existence is merely apparent (2.1).[4]

Ignatius then described the fate of unbelievers: they would not be embodied by resurrection (*Smyrn.* 2.1). This statement gives us a glimpse of the christology of the docetists, and, by distinction, the christology of Ignatius. Those unbelievers, Ignatius argued, would become what they thought about Christ—without a body, merely a

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[3] See William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 223.

[4] The phrase αὐτοὶ τὸ δοκεῖν ὄντες seems to mean that Ignatius regarded their existence 'as Christians' was only apparent because they failed to hold to the true essence of Christianity—the incarnate person and work of Christ.

spirit being.[5] In distinction, therefore, Ignatius affirmed that Christ was truly embodied with flesh, truly suffered, truly rose again (bodily and fleshly). Ignatius said unequivocally, 'For I know and believe that he existed in the flesh also after the resurrection (καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἐν σαρκὶ αὐτόν)' (3.1). Here Ignatius provided historical and traditional evidence. When Jesus presented himself to Peter and other disciples, he said, '"Take, feel me and and see that I am not a bodiless demon"' (3.2). Ignatius was likely paraphrasing a gospel tradition similar to that found in Luke 24:39.[6] There seems to have been a rather broad testimony of this presentation of Jesus as having a body of flesh rather than merely an immaterial ghostly body. Not only did Ignatius appeal to Jesus's own words, but he also relayed the testimony of the apostles. When they touched him and believed, they were 'mingling with his flesh and blood (κραθέντες τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ αἵματι)' (*Smyrn.* 3.2).[7]

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[5] Though we could imagine that these false teachers believed Christ was freed from his body in resurrection as a spirit being, and thus the error would be a rejection of the fleshly resurrection, Ignatius just finished complaining that they rejected the true suffering of Christ—indicating that they rejected the fleshly nature of Christ even before his death and resurrection. See Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Kari Syreeni, vol. 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 160–61; Wolfram Uebele, *"Viele Verführer sind in die Welt ausgegangen": die Gegner in den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien und in den Johannesbriefen*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, vol. 151 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 84–86.

[6] See Arthur J. Bellinzoni, 'The Gospel of Luke in the Apostolic Fathers: An Overview,' in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 57–58.

[7] If 'flesh and blood' is original, it would be reasonable to conclude that Ignatius was drawing some sort of analogy to the eucharistic observance in the churches. In the same way that the apostles were 'closely united' with the flesh and blood of Christ, believers in the churches could be 'closely united' with the flesh and blood of Christ through spiritual and physical union with him through fellowship in the

Finally, as evidence for the reliability of the apostles' testimony, Ignatius appealed to their zeal and martyrdom (*Smyrn.* 3.2). He then returned to the person of Christ after the resurrection, emphasizing that he ate and drank with the disciples after the resurrection, demonstrating that he was 'flesh (σαρκικός)' (3.3). Because Ignatius was referring to the fleshly character of Christ in his humanity, we could conclude that he sought to remind his readers that he also affirmed that Christ was 'spiritually united with the Father' (3.3; also see *Magn.* 7.1).[8]

It is important to note that Ignatius was not attempting to persuade his readers about the truth of the incarnational narrative through these arguments. The following statement makes it clear that the Smyrnaeans were already in agreement with Ignatius on these points. He knew that his readers were in agreement with him, though Ignatius still wanted to guard them against false teachers whom they should avoid meeting (*Smyrn.* 4.1). Ignatius also appealed to his own fleshly, physical suffering as support for the real fleshly suffering of Christ, 'who is perfect man (τοῦ τελείου ἀνθρώπου)' (4.2).[9]

Christian community. See Kenneth J. Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna: A New Translation and Commentary*, rev. and exp. edn (Zanesville, OH: CHResources, 2009), 131.

[8] Ignatius repeatedly referred to Christ as θεός in the present reality of his being, and here he acknowledged that Christ—in his present reality after the resurrection—'was united with the Father,' contrasting this with its dichotomy: fleshly human existence. Therefore, this unity with the Father may be taken as a way of referring to Christ's shared divine status.

[9] On this passage, Bergamelli notes: 'Pertanto l'aggettivo riferito all'uomo (τέλειος) marca fortemente la realtà della carne umana del Cristo e in particolare la realtà della sua passione' (Ferdinando Bergamelli, 'Cristo "l'uomo nuovo" e "l'uomo perfetto" in Ignazio di Antiochia (Efesini 20,1; Smirnesi 4,2),' *Studia patristica* 26 [1993]: 110; compare Michael Rackl, *Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien: nebst einer Voruntersuchung: die Echtheit der sieben Ignatianischen Briefe verteidigt gegen Daniel Völter*, Freiburger theologische Studien, ed. G. Hoberg and G. Pfeilschifter, vol. 14 [Freiburg: St. Louis, 1914], 134). However, docetists who denied the fleshly humanity of Christ would have taken exception to the designation

Ignatius again made note of 'certain people'—the false teachers—who 'ignorantly deny' Christ (*Smyrn.* 5.1). They advocated death while Ignatius advocated the 'truth'—the accurate content of the incarnational narrative. The false believers had denied the testimonies of this truth: 'Neither the prophecies nor the law of Moses have persuaded them' (5.1). This referred to the written documents of the Old Testament that he believed pointed to the truth of Christ; thus, he may have had in mind the misinterpretations of the 'archives' we saw in *Philadelphians* 8.1–2. In this connection, Schoedel argues:

> Thus, arguments that Ignatius had used against Judaizers to subordinate the Scriptures to Christ are used here (in a modified form) against docetists to confirm the reality of the humanity of Christ. Consequently, here too the gospel and the sufferings of Christians are given greater importance than the Scriptures. … Ignatius is neither offering a defense of the Scriptures nor speaking by way of concession (as in *Phd.* 5.2; 9.1) to people overly enthusiastic about them. Their authority is simply taken for granted in the Christian community.[10]

Yet it does not appear that the issue was one of authority, but rather of proper interpretation. As in *Philadelphians* 8.1–2, Ignatius argued for the application of a christological hermeneutic that used the incarnational narrative as the interpretational key to the authoritative Scriptures. In fact, Ignatius complained that the docetists actually rejected several proofs of the incarnational narrative—the law of Moses, the gospel, and the suffering of the martyrs (*Smyrn.* 5.1). It is important to note, however, the function of the incarnational narrative for Ignatius. In *Philadelphians* 8.2 Ignatius used the incarnational narrative as the standard for measuring proper interpretation of Scripture, while in *Smyrnaeans* 5.1 it was the proper conclusion one was to draw from reading Scripture.

Ignatius regarded any hypocritical praise he may have received from 'certain people' to be useless and empty if it was not also

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'perfect man' in the sense of full and complete humanity.

[10] Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 234.

accompanied by praise for the incarnate Son of God: 'For what does it benefit me if someone praises me but blasphemes my Lord, not confessing him as flesh-bearing (μὴ ὁμολογῶν αὐτὸν σαρκοφόρον)' (*Smyrn.* 5.2)? It appears that for Ignatius, fellowship did not center on merely formal relationships, but rather on a proper christological confession.[11] In any case, Ignatius asserted this confession of the Lord's incarnation as the standard by which a person's spiritual condition and identity as a Christian were to be judged. Simply put, those who denied the incarnation were 'unbelievers' (ἄπιστα), and Ignatius did not feel it was appropriate even to mention their names unless they repented regarding the reality of the passion (5.3).

Ignatius then raised the level of the polemic when he said that all beings—visible and invisible—will be judged 'if they do not believe in the blood of Christ' (*Smyrn.* 6.1).[12] The idea is that even the highest ranking non-physical beings acknowledge the fleshly suffering of Christ, which put those who 'ignorantly deny him' in a poor light. Ignatius then reminded the Smyrnaeans that nothing was preferable to 'faith and love,' echoing the numerous occurrences of this same couplet, which, I have argued, refers to the inner and outer harmony of faith and works, confession and discipleship.

The false teachers held 'heterodox' views (ἑτεροδοξοῦντας) about the grace of Christ, and were contrary to the 'mind of God'

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[11] It would thus be inappropriate to reduce Ignatius's concept of catholic identity to an ecclesiastical authority structure or submission to particular offices. The offices and office-holders themselves would appear to have been strengthened by Ignatius not to create or to enforce ecclesiastical unity, but to preserve, protect, and promote the incarnational narrative and thereby maintain unity.

[12] See Gal 1:8–9, where Paul used similar hyperbole to describe the fate even of angels from heaven that preach a different Christ or different gospel. Some manuscripts add ὁ θεός ἐστιν, though the evidence for χριστοῦ alone includes the shorter Greek recension, the Berlin papyrus, the short Latin version, as well as the Armenian and Coptic versions. See Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 228.

(*Smyrn.* 6.2). By their actions they also denied the faith and love that were germane to Christian identity. These false believers 'have no concern for love,' manifested in good works. The incarnation continued to function as the standard of truth and ethics, so that true love was expressed through meeting people's real, tangible needs. Those who spiritualized Christ may have also tended to spiritualize people and the world. Their worship and service may have turned cerebral, spiritual, perhaps contemplative—functioning in the invisible, inner life rather than the outer, practical life. Such a view would have been contrary to the mind of God, and at the heart of this useless life stood an implicit rejection of the incarnation.[13]

At the same time, the false believers 'are far away from eucharist and prayer, on account of not confessing the eucharist to be the flesh (σάρκα) of our Savior Jesus Christ, which (τήν) suffered for our sins and in kindness the Father raised up' ([6.2] 7.1).[14] The term ὁμολογεῖν in this context seems to link eucharistic worship with a confession of the incarnation, a confession antithetical to those mentioned earlier who 'do not believe in the blood of Christ' (6.1). This suggests that a proper participation of the meal is itself a community confession of the incarnational narrative—the heart of catholic unity and identity in Ignatius's understanding.[15] Ignatius passed judgment against these false believers who 'speak against the good gift of God' through contentiousness, and who ought to have expressed true love and thereby partake in the resurrection (*Smyrn.* 7.1).[16] They should be

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[13] Here we get an even clearer picture of the antithesis of Ignatius's call for unity of 'flesh and spirit,' 'faith and love'—the practical outward manifestation of a proper incarnational confession.

[14] Some versions include this passage in *Smyrn.* 6.2.

[15] See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 240; Michael J. Svigel, 'The Center of Ignatius of Antioch's Catholic Christianity,' *Studia patristica* 45 (2010): 367–371.

[16] 'Good gift of God' may very well refer to the eucharist just mentioned. See 'heavenly gift' in Heb 6:4 as well as imagery in John 4:10 (see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 241; Matthew Larsen and Michael Svigel, 'The First Century Two Ways Catechesis and Hebrews 6:1–6,' in *The*

avoided and not even spoken of. But the faithful Smyrnaeans were to 'pay attention to the prophets and especially to the gospel, in which the suffering [of Christ] has been made clear to us and the resurrection has been completed' (7.2).

Ignatius next urged the Smyrnaeans to flee from divisions as this was a 'beginning of evils' (ὡς ἀρχὴν κακῶν) (*Smryn.* 8.1). That is, by separating from the established leadership of the church for whatever reasons, evil was the result, which could take the form of being deluded by false teachings. Therefore, Ignatius's primary reason for calling for unity and submission to the bishop in the local church was to prevent the damage of false teachers on the believers' faithfulness to the incarnational narrative. Only by submitting to the teaching of the bishop and the fellowship of the community would the true incarnational narrative be learned and lived through the teachings, texts, and traditions of the catholic church. They were to follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father.[17] This meant abstaining from eucharistic worship or baptism without the blessing and purview of the bishop (8.1), which would serve to protect the sanctity and proper confessional significance of these acts of worship.

Then Ignatius made this famous statement: 'Wherever the bishop may appear, there let the gathering be; just as wherever Christ Jesus may be, there is the catholic church (ὅπου ἂν ᾖ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία)' (*Smryn.* 8.2).[18] Jesus

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Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity, ed. Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015], 490–491).

[17] This is similar to Ignatius's prophetic utterance described in *Phld.* 7.1–2, and the structural analogy—though distinct from others—resulted in the same exhortation.

[18] Howell argues, 'the comparison turns on locality versus universality; the bishop is the fullness of the local church (diocese) while Christ Jesus is the fullness of the whoe church' (*Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 35). Howell's interpretation, however, fall short of fully explaining why Ignatius uses the imperative in the first line; this is not a description of the fullness of the local church with the bishop but an exhortation to the whole congregation to be in harmony with and in submission to the bishop.

Christ was the head of the catholic or universal church, and wherever he was preached, proclaimed, and worshipped according to truth, that was the mark of the catholic church. In the immediate context, this confession could come in the form of proper expression of baptism and eucharistic worship.[19] The bishop himself represented this center of catholic Christianity in the local sphere, and therefore believers should stay close to him (8.2).

Pearson misreads this passage and misses the Ignatian pattern of the heavenly and spiritual reality as a model for the earthly reality when he writes, 'According to him [Ignatius], where the bishop is there is also the universal church.'[20] Actually, Ignatius encouraged local church unity with the bishop by appealing to catholic church unity centered on Jesus Christ. Though Pearson's statement seems to concur with common scholarly opinion regarding one of the marks of catholic Christianity (that is, the unifying authority of the bishop), it does not allow Ignatius to define catholicity on his own terms, and, in fact, short-circuits the language of Ignatius's own parallel:

ὅπου ἂν φανῇ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος,   ἐκεῖ τὸ πλῆθος ἔστω

ὥσπερ ὅπου ἂν ᾖ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία

We should note well Ignatius's intentional use of the subjunctive and imperative moods in the first line—the exhortation to his readers. The second line indicates the analogical and theological basis for this exhortation (evidenced by the conjunction ὥσπερ), which does not include an imperative, but rather an understood ἔστιν in the construction ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία. Thus, Ignatius leaned on what he perceived to have been a common understanding of catholic Christianity associated in some way with the presence of Jesus Christ. As I have and will argue, this presence or being of Jesus Christ was manifested in the various churches through the correct confession of his person and work, either through truthful proclamation and teaching or through the

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[19] See comment on *Did.* 4.1 below, pp. 182–183.

[20] Birger Albert Pearson, *The Emergence of Christian Religion: Essays on Early Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 174.

confession of a proper eucharistic worship that testified to the true incarnation and suffering of Christ. Therefore, the presence of Christ that marked the reality of catholic Christianity, I argue, was the right confession—in word and rite—of the incarnational narrative.

However, at this early stage the use of the term 'catholic' in *Smyrn.* 8.2 should not be construed as a technical term, as it would eventually become later in the second century. Rather, its usage was more general and conventional, and the concept of 'catholicity' was described with other language and images in both Ignatius and other early writers. 'Catholic' in the present context implies a type of relationship rather than geographical extent or even solidarity of a creed.[21] 'Catholic' churches in Ignatius's sense were those

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[21] Lightfoot argued that καθολική here refers to geographic extent, that is, the united, worldwide church rather than the local church (Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, 2d edn, vol. 2 [London: Macmillan, 1889; reprint, New York: Olms, 1973], 310–12). Many have followed along a similar path since (Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres; Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th corrected ed., Sources chrétiennes, vol. 10 (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 139–40; Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 170; Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien* [Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873], 428–29). Although geographic extension is by necessity a function of 'catholic' in almost any definition of the term, it would be a mistake to limit it to this function. Rather, it conveys the sense of wholeness, completeness, or unity (see the study by Alejandro Garciadego, *Katholiké Ekklesia: El significado de epíteto "Catholica" aplicado a "Iglesia" desde san Ignacio de Antioquía hasta Orígenes* [Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1953]). However, the insistence on the mere idea of headship under Christ appears to misread Ignatius's statement (Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 244). Ignatius already applied the analogy of headship and submission in 8.1, where the church was exhorted to follow the bishop just as Christ followed the Father. The phrase ἂν ᾖ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς seems to imply more than merely headship—especially since in Ignatius's repeated statements concerning order of God through Christ as manifested in the earthly, physical church through the mediation of the bishops and presbyters (e.g., *Smyrn.* 9.1). The emphasis seems to have been on the christological center of catholic Christianity in Ignatius's estimation. This makes sense once it is realized that Ignatius's primary

churches that were in fellowship with God and Christ through faithfulness to the incarnational narrative in both theology and practice. Through this fellowship, they were also in fellowship with their ordained bishops and with other catholic Christians. Yet the central identity-establishing feature of catholic Christianity was its fidelity to the proper understanding, proclamation, and worship of the incarnate Son of God—whether by confession, eucharistic worship, or lifestyle. Though this is the only use of 'catholic' by Ignatius, this concept of the universal church centered on the incarnational narrative is found throughout his seven letters.[22]

Transitioning into his closing statements, exhortations, and greetings (*Smyrn.* 9.1–2), Ignatius commended the church for welcoming his companions, Philo and Rhaius Agathopus (10.1, see *Phld.* 11.1), who had apparently been sent back to Philadelphia and Smyrna after Ignatius's departure from that city to Troas.[23] Just as he did in the letter to the Philadelphians (*Phld.* 10.1–2), Ignatius noted that the church in Antioch was at peace and urged the

concern in bolstering the authority of the bishop was not sociological, political, or personal, but rather doctrinal and theological—the ordained bishops in Ignatius's day were the ones entrusted with the right teaching concerning Jesus Christ and therefore remaining close to the bishop meant remaining close to the living standard of truth. In the same way, wherever Jesus Christ is—by means of the true community confession of the incarnational narrative through faith and love—there was the catholic church.

[22] See *Eph.* 5.1; 17.1; *Phld.* 5.1; 9.1; *Smyrn.* 1.2.

[23] The fifth century Berlin papyrus Codex 10581, Armenian, Coptic, and Arabic versions support the reading θεοῦ in this passage, while the eleventh century Greek Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus and the Latin translation of the middle recention support the reading Χριστοῦ θεοῦ. The latter is preferred in Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 232. Though the reading θεοῦ alone enjoys the earliest and most geographically widespread testimony, the editors of *Die Apostolischen Väter* apparently selected Χριστοῦ θεοῦ as the more difficult reading that explains the origins of θεοῦ as an attempt to smooth out and simplifying the awkward Χριστοῦ θεοῦ. However, the reading Χριστοῦ θεοῦ, in fact, seems too difficult to have been originally penned by Ignatius in the first place.

Smyrnaeans to send a delegation to Antioch to 'congratulate them,' as their corporate life had been restored to its proper state (*Smyrn.* 11.2). The fact that Ignatius encouraged both the Philadelphian and the Smyrnaean churches to each send a delegation to Antioch suggests that the churches of Asia Minor as well as those of Syria enjoyed a relationship.[24] At least the circumstances did not allow for longstanding hostility, and there is nothing in Ignatius's writings that indicated their reception would have been anything but amicable. Given the centrality and fundamental importance of the incarnational narrative to Ignatius's theology and thought, one can reasonably conclude that the relationship between Ignatius and the bishops of Asia Minor precluded the possibility that the Asian bishops rejected Ignatius's christological standard of catholic identity.

EXPOSITION OF *POLYCARP*

The letter of Ignatius to Polycarp is the shortest of the Ignatian corpus. It is also the most personal and direct. Though it primarily addressed Polycarp in the second person singular, at times Ignatius addressed a plurality—perhaps the presbytery or deaconate as an extension of Polycarp's bishopric rather than the entire church, which he had already addressed in his companion letter to the Smyrnaeans.[25]

At the start of his letter, Ignatius greeted Polycarp as 'bishop of the church of the Smyrnaeans, rather, to those supervised by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ ' (*Pol.* insc.). Ignatius acknowledged that Polycarp was under the headship of the Father and Christ, in harmony, so to speak, with the will of God. Obviously, Ignatius thought highly of Polycarp (1.1), so we may assume without doubt that after spending considerable time with him while sojourning in Smyrna, Ignatius viewed his fellow bishop

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[24] The extent of this fellowship is further evidenced in Ignatius's farewell. He greeted Polycarp as well as the presbyters and the deacons, then all members of the church (12.2–13.1). He also extended greetings from Philo of Cilicia, indicating a geographically broad communion.

[25] See discussion below, p. 161, n. 27.

as in harmony with his own appraisal of the incarnational narrative and its central role in catholic Christian identity.

Yet Ignatius urged Polycarp to continue steadfast in his work of pastoral ministry, caring for both the physical and spiritual needs of the flock (*Pol.* 1.2). Ignatius's exhortation to Polycarp was twofold: to press on in his personal course (see Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:7) and to exhort all so that they may be saved. However, it does not appear that these two can be separated in Ignatius's mind. The development that followed, with his successive imperatival statements, suggests that these were both achieved by fulfilling his responsibilities as a bishop to exhort all people, providing physical and spiritual care (*Pol.* 1.2). This introduction set the general tone of this letter, which consists primarily of personal exhortations and advice for pastoral ministry. Ignatius did not, however, spend much time on christological matters, most likely because they were of the same mind in theological matters or because these issues had been discussed at length in person. Additionally, anything Ignatius wished to say about Christ had already been said in the general letter to the church in Smyrna. Given the demonstrable enthusiasm Ignatius had for conformity to the incarnational narrative, though, we can conclude that Ignatius felt confident that Polycarp needed no correction or exhortation in this matter. For both bishops, then, the incarnational narrative would have been regarded as a theological axiom.

Continuing with his exhortation, Ignatius encouraged Polycarp to bring even troublesome disciples into submission and to endure hardship and take on challenges in light of a future reward (*Pol.* 2.1–3). He then urged Polycarp to stand against 'those appearing to be trustworthy and teaching other things (ἑτεροδιδασκαλοῦντες)' (3.1). If Ignatius had been aware of any specific threats from false teachers in Smyrna itself, he revealed no serious alarm about them. Instead, he offered a clear expression of the incarnational narrative: 'Wait for the one beyond time: the timeless, the invisible, who on our account became visible, the untouchable, the impassible, who on our account was passible, who endured on our account in every way' (3.2). In this instance

Ignatius used several terms to express qualities of deity.[26] And he said that Christ should not only be the goal and motivation, but also the model, who endured in every way for believers—just as Ignatius was encouraging Polycarp to endure.

After offering several practical pastoral instructions (*Pol.* 4.1–5.2), Ignatius abruptly shifted from the second person singular to plural.[27] And as he did in his letter to the Philadelphians and Smyrnaeans, Ignatius relayed that the church at Antioch was at peace, leaving him concerned now with his own faithfulness in martyrdom (7.1). At this point Ignatius shifted back to the singular and addressed Polycarp by name, encouraging him to select a

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[26] These are eternal (τὸν ἄχρονον), invisible (τὸν ἀόρατον), intangible (τὸν ἀψηλάφητον), and unsuffering (τὸν ἀπαθῆ). On the theological and philosophical import of these terms, see Henning Paulsen, *Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, vol. 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 119 and Rackl, *Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien*, 184–89.

[27] The scholarly consensus is that Ignatius began addressing the church as a whole: Camelot, *Ignace, Polycarpe, Martyre de Polycarpe*, 151; Henning Paulsen, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 2. neubearbeitete ed., vol. 2, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 105; Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 274. This would be such a drastic shift in audiences that Corwin even suggests the section had possibly been misplaced from the letter to the Smyrnaeans (Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, Yale Publications in Religion, vol. 1 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960], 199). However, a shift to Polycarp's 'leadership team' seems a less drastic turn than addressing the bishop in one line and the entire congregation in the next. It seems that the arguments for an address to Polycarp's presbyters and deacons has been too hastily dismissed. The analogous functions of οἰκονόμοι, πάρεδοι, and ὑπηρέται—though not exactly paralleling the individual three offices—make more sense in reference to the leaders of the local church in Smyrna, especially in light of Paul's usage of ὑπηρέτας and οἰκονόμος in 1 Cor 4:1, a letter with which Ignatius may have been familiar and to which Ignatius may have alluded in a similar context in *Trall.* 2.3. Nevertheless, most commentators take this as an address to the entire congregation, and I will therefore concede, though not concur.

courier and representative to go to the church in Antioch, and thus accomplish God's work in obedience (7.2–3).

As he concluded his letter, Ignatius noted that he was unable to write to 'all the churches.'[28] He said that he would be sent by sea from Troas to Neapolis, and asked Polycarp to write on his behalf to the churches between Smyrna and Troas (*Pol.* 8.1). The churches who would be unable to send messengers were encouraged to at least send letters. Ignatius then extended greetings to all the believers there, and also greeted whomever was selected to travel to Syria (8.2). Finally, Ignatius closed with another clear assertion of the deity of Christ, bidding them farewell 'in our God Jesus Christ' (8.2).

Of the seven authentic letters of the Ignatian corpus, Ignatius's brief note to his fellow bishop, Polycarp, is the most devoid of lengthy and profound elements of the incarnational narrative. Though he mentions both the pre-incarnate existence, incarnation, and suffering of Christ, he does not explicitly discuss the resurrection or ascension. However, because of the personal, pastoral, and brief nature of the correspondence, we should not be surprised that it does not contain a full-bodied, well-argued explanation or defense of Christianity's incarnational center.

RECEPTION BY THE SMYRNAEANS AND POLYCARP

Ignatius's christology in the letter to the Smyrnaeans and the letter of Polycarp is clearly incarnational, referring to the deity and humanity of Christ, virgin birth, physical suffering, death, and fleshly resurrection. As in his previous letters, Ignatius repeatedly and creatively emphasized the importance of faithfulness to the incarnational narrative as a standard for true Christian identity.

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[28] This may simply mean all the churches to which he wrote before, perhaps to encourage them to send a delegation or be part of the sending council to Antioch.

Figure 9: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's
Letter to the Smyrnaeans and Polycarp

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Smyrn.* 1.1; 3.3; *Pol.* 3.2; 5.1; 8.3
2) Incarnational union	*Smyrn.* 1.1; 3.2; 4.2; 5.2; 6.1; 6.2; 12.2; *Pol.* 5.2
3) Birth and life	*Smyrn.* 1.1
4) Suffering and death	*Smyrn.* 1.1; 1.2; 2; 5.2; 6.2; 7.2; 12.2; *Pol.* 3.2
5) Bodily resurrection	*Smyrn.* 1.2; 2; 3.1–2; 6.2; 7.2; 12.2.
6) Heavenly assumption	

Ignatius explicitly asserted that Jesus Christ somehow established the identity of the 'catholic' church (*Smryn.* 8.2). He tied the term 'catholic' to proper confession and worship of Jesus Christ, especially in relation to the incarnational narrative. If 'catholic' was used by Ignatius as an identifying (and at the same time boundary-setting) label for those churches around the world that Ignatius viewed as being in fellowship with God through Christ and the Spirit as well as in fellowship with other like-minded believers, then Ignatius was also demonstrating that catholic identity in the early church centered about the distinct incarnational narrative.

Given the centrality and fundamental importance of the incarnational narrative to Ignatius's theology and thought, one may reasonably conclude that the relationship between Ignatius and the bishops of Asia Minor precluded the possibility that the Asian bishops rejected Ignatius's identifying standard of catholic Christianity while accepting his leadership as a bishop.

CHAPTER 9. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH'S CONCEPT OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

Based on the preceding examination of the seven authentic letters of Ignatius in chapters 4–8, we can discern a well-defined Ignatian incarnational narrative consisting of several consistent elements. Though all elements of the narrative are never presented in a single passage in the Ignatian corpus, the following six 'movements' represent a synthesis of the Ignatian incarnational narrative.

1. The pre-incarnate existence of the exalted Son/Logos. The first movement relates to the person, character, or nature of Christ as divine and places the Son/Logos in a position with the Father prior to the incarnation. Ignatius explicitly calls Jesus Christ 'God' (θεός) several times.[1] He also describes him as the one who was with the Father before the ages,[2] and who is always united with the Father in all things.[3] As God, Christ is atemporal, eternal, invisible, intangible, and impassible.[4]

2. The incarnational union of the Son/Logos with fleshly humanity. The second step in the narrative also relates to the person or nature of Christ, but after the incarnational union in which the divine Son

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[1] *Eph.* insc., 1.1; 18.2; 19.3; *Rom.* insc.; 3.3; 6.3; *Smyrn.* 1.1; *Pol.* 8.3.

[2] *Magn.* 6.1; 7.2.

[3] *Magn* 7.1–2.

[4] *Pol.* 3.2.

and perfect humanity mysteriously coinhere.[5] Though he existed with God and as God prior to his incarnation, the Son took on true and perfect humanity with a real body of flesh and blood.[6] The one 'new man,' Jesus Christ, is therefore flesh and spirit, made and not made, God manifested in the flesh.[7] In fact, the deity and humanity coinhered in Christ to such a degree that Ignatius could use the phrase 'blood of God' in reference to his death.[8]

3. The true birth and life of the incarnate Son/Logos. The third movement of Ignatius's incarnational narrative includes events of human life—a real birth and real day-to-day living in this physical world. The means of the incarnation of the divine Son was the conception in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit.[9] He was therefore truly

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[5] Though Ignatius's incarnational christology could be regarded as compatible with the later explications of Chalcedonian orthodoxy defined in 451, it would of course be anachronistic to call Ignatius's christology 'Chalcedonian.' Whereas Chalcedon defines its christology in terms of 'two natures' and 'one person,' both rejecting mixture and separation, Ignatius's simple statements of deity and humanity in paradoxical unity lack the refinement of language that resulted after centuries of debate and conflict. Foster provides a balanced analysis: 'There was much distance yet to be travelled between the primitive Christological statements articulated by Ignatius and the more detailed and reflective creeds and discussions of the fourth and fifth centuries. … Notwithstanding this caveat, Ignatius can be seen as one who, at least in embryonic form, resonates with key features of those later "orthodox" statements. He relentlessly declares the humanity and divinity of Christ, and his views of divinity incarnated in human form reveal that he does not hold to adoptionistic interpretations of Christ being clothed with divinity at either his baptism or resurrection' (Paul Foster, 'The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster [London: T. & T. Clark, 2007], 100). Also see Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, 2d edn, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London: Mowbrays, 1975).

[6] *Eph*. 19.1–2; *Trall*. insc.; *Smyrn*. 1.1; 4.2; 5.2; 6.1; 12.2.

[7] *Eph*. 7.2; 19.3; 20.1–2; *Trall*. 8.1; *Phld*. 4.1; *Smyrn*. 1.1.

[8] *Eph*. 1.1.

[9] *Eph*. 7.2; 18.2; 19.1.

born, ate and drank like other humans, and lived as 'perfect man.'[10] He was baptized by John the Baptist and lived on earth unto the time of Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch.[11]

4. The true suffering and death of the incarnate Son/Logos.[12] The fourth element in the narrative, following the life of Christ, is the passion and death by crucifixion. Ignatius consistently and repeatedly emphasizes that Jesus Christ truly suffered and died for sins.[13] The cross upon which Christ was crucified thus becomes a metaphor for the saving passion and death of Christ.[14] That this suffering and death was the experience of the divine-human Jesus is made explicit by Ignatius's assertion that Christ was 'true life in death' as well as his startling references to the 'blood of God' and 'passion of my God.'[15]

5. The true fleshly resurrection of the incarnate Son/Logos. The fifth event of the narrative involves the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the fleshly body that had been crucified. In Ignatius's foundational narrative, the same God who came from heaven, became incarnate by a virgin, and suffered and died as a human being, also rose physically from the dead.[16] In fact, Ignatius explicitly asserts that Christ still possessed his fleshly body after his resurrection, citing what he believed to be eyewitness apostolic tradition as his source.[17]

6. The heavenly assumption of the incarnate Son/Logos. The final movement of Ignatius's incarnational narrative includes the

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[10] *Eph.* 7.2; 18.2; *Magn.* 11.1; *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 4.2.

[11] *Eph.* 18.2; *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 1.1–2.

[12] *Eph.* 7.2; 9.1; 16.2; 18.1, 2; 19.1; 20.1; *Magn.* 5.2; 11, *Trall.* insc.; 2.1; 9.1; 10.1; 11.2; *Rom.* 6.1, 3; *Phld.* insc.; 8.2; 9.2; *Smyrn.* 1.1; 1.2; 2; 5.2; 6.2; 7.2; 12.2; *Pol.* 3.2.

[13] *Eph.* 19.1; 20.1; *Magn.* 5.2; 11.1; *Trall.* insc.; 2.1; 9.1; *Rom.* 6.1; *Phld.* insc.; *Smyrn.* 1.2; 2.1; *Pol.* 3.2.

[14] *Eph.* 9.1; 16.2; 18.1, 2; *Trall.* 9.1; 11.2; *Phld.* 8.2; *Smyrn.* 1.1–2.

[15] *Eph.* 1.1; 7.2; *Rom.* 6.3.

[16] *Eph.* 20.1; *Magn.* 9.1; 11.1; *Trall.* 9.2; *Rom.* 6.1; *Phld.* insc.; 8.2; 9.2; *Smyrn.* 1.2; 2.1; 7.2; 12.2.

[17] *Smyrn.* 3.1–2.

exaltation of the risen Christ into heaven, where He currently dwells with the Father. Though Ignatius does not mention this final movement of the incarnational narrative explicitly more than a few times,[18] Ignatius could not speak the way he did about the living Christ without presupposing his exalted position in heaven.[19] As the exalted Lord, Jesus is the object of faith, hope, love, prayer, and worship.[20] And as savior, teacher, and shepherd, he is the present means of salvation and source of life.[21]

Though the six movements of the incarnational narrative accurately represent a synthesis of Ignatius's concept of the christological narrative drawn from his writings, Ignatius himself never expresses this full narrative in any single passage. If we were to require each of Ignatius's own writings to explicitly conform to all six points of the synthetic narrative, only *Ephesians* and *Magnesians* would meet the burden of evidence, as all the others fail to positively assert specific movements in the narrative (see Figure 10 below).

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[18] *Eph.* 7.2; *Magn.* 7.2; *Rom.* 3.3; 5.3.

[19] *Eph.* 5.1; 7.2; *Rom.* insc.; 4.3.

[20] *Eph.* 2.2; 4.2; 14.1; 20.1; 21.2; *Magn.* 11.1; *Rom.* insc.; *Phld.* 11.2; *Smyrn.* 1.1.

[21] *Eph.* 3.2; 9.1–2; 11.1; 20.2; *Magn.* insc.; 1.2; 5.2; 9.1–2; *Trall.* 1.1; 6.1; *Rom.* 8.2; 9.1; *Phld.* insc.; *Smyrn.* 4.2; 8.2; 9.2; *Pol.* insc.; 3.2.

Figure 10: Discernible references to the six movements of Ignatius of Antioch's incarnational narrative as represented in the seven letters of the Ignatian corpus

Letter	1 Pre-incarnate existence	2 Incarnational union	3 Birth and life	4 Suffering and death	5 Bodily resurrection	6 Heavenly assumption
Ephesians	+	+	+	+	+	+
Magnesians	+	+	+	+	+	+
Trallians		+	+	+	+	
Romans	+	+		+	+	
Philadelphians		+		+	+	
Smyrnaeans	+	+	+	+	+	
Polycarp	+	+		+		

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING IGNATIUS'S INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE

In light of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's writings, we can draw several tentative conclusions about second century incarnational christology and early catholic Christian identity.

First, Ignatius regarded the incarnational narrative to be the center of the 'truth' of catholic Christianity. It was therefore the standard against which false teaching was measured by Ignatius and found wanting (*Eph.* 7.1–2; *Smyrn.* 6.2; 8.2). He also interpreted texts and traditions in light of this central incarnational hermeneutic, as seen in his exposition of Hebrew heroes and texts in his debate with Judaizers in Philadelphia (*Phld.* 8.2). Thus, encounters with diverse christologies did not form or establish the incarnational narrative or catholic identity. Rather, the central incarnational narrative itself was the source of Ignatius's polemic against false teachings; reaction to the false teachings was not the cause of his emphasis on the incarnational narrative. That is, non-incarnational narratives were regarded by Ignatius as 'heresy' based on the perceived authority of a well-establish incarnational narrative that found itself in conflict with differing views (*Eph.* 6.2; *Smyrn.* 2.1).

While diversity and conflict clearly existed in Asia Minor, the chaotic picture of powerful sects that molded and shaped the form and language of later catholic christology does not appear to be supported by the Ignatian testimony. This is not to say that the form and specific elements of Ignatius's incarnational narrative did not expand and contract as he variously expressed the narrative in the face of changing challenges and conflicts. Nevertheless, in all these cases the content was always centered on the divine and human Christ and the central events of the death and resurrection. The catholic unity centered on faithfulness to the incarnation narrative while diversity existed in Ignatius's forms of expression. If the central elements of the incarnation were missing or rejected by other teachers, however, the affirmation would have been regarded as deviancy and dissention—or, in Ignatius's terms, 'heresy' and 'schism.'

Second, the various proto-creedal statements and narrative summaries (e.g., *Eph.* 7.2; 18.2; 19.1–3; *Trall.* 9; *Phld.* 8.2; *Smyrn.* 1.1–2) as well as the depth to which the incarnational narrative seems to have penetrated Ignatius's worldview and rhetoric suggests that the incarnational narrative could not have been a recent development in Ignatius's thought. By the time he wrote his letters in Asia Minor (around 110 CE), the incarnational narrative had already been firmly established as the organizing center of Ignatius's thought and the source of his polemic and paraenesis.[22] Such systematic indoctrination takes time. It could hardly have been an ad hoc development in the midst of Ignatius's polemic in western Asia. Thus, Ignatius either developed or inherited the components of this narrative while in Antioch in the years preceding his arrest.

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[22] Thus, I believe the conclusions of Bernhard Mutschler with regard to the theology of Irenaeus—that Johannine incarnational christology stood at the center of Irenaeus's theology—can also be said concerning Ignatius, but with even more force. See Bernhard Mutschler, *Irenäus als johanneischer Theologe: Studien zur Schriftauslegung bei Irenäus von Lyon*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, ed. Christoph Markschies, vol. 21 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

Third, Ignatius's close and often personal associations with individuals, leaders, and communities from Antioch, throughout Asia Minor, and even in Macedonia and Rome, at least suggest a wide reception of the same incarnational narrative that indicated his personal sense of catholic Christian identity. Because the incarnational narrative was inseparable from Ignatius and his writings, to receive Ignatius or his writings was also to receive his incarnational Christology. At least it indicated that they had not rejected it. The fact that the leaders and churches in Ephesus, Tralles, Magnesia, and Smyrna eagerly accepted Ignatius's letters suggests that Ignatius's 'Antiochene' incarnational narrative was shared by those recipients in Asia Minor.

In sum, Ignatius's letters provide both direct and indirect evidence that the incarnational narrative formed the center of catholic Christian identity in Antioch, western Asia Minor, and Rome.[23] Through an examination of Ignatius's seven letters, I have shown that not only did the Antiocene bishop hold to a mature, stable incarnational narrative, but this narrative was foundational to his theology and thought, and it served as the source of his paraenesis and polemic. Ignatius also assumed his recipients in Asia Minor and Rome held to the same incarnational narrative, suggesting that this christology was associated with catholic self-identity in diverse regions of the world by 110 CE. Nevertheless, because all the evidence from the previous chapters came from the pen of one man, these conclusions must be regarded as tentative until they can be corroborated by direct testimony from other regions.

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[23] Based only on the letters of Ignatius himself, I regard the evidence for Syrian Antioch to be rather solid, as it comes to us first hand from Ignatius. I also believe the case for western Asia Minor is strong, for Ignatius both left messages and personally interacted with those churches. However, Ignatius's testimony regarding Rome is of an indirect nature, and he could not have confirmed that his incarnational christology would have been shared by the Romans.

CONFIRMING THE CATHOLICITY OF THE
INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE

In chapters 10–14, I will move beyond the tentative findings summarized in this chapter and engage additional Christian writings from the early second century. In this way I will provide evidence that the testimony of a foundational incarnational narrative is not limited to Ignatius of Antioch, but complemented and strengthened by writings throughout the Christian world from the same generation as Ignatius.[24] This will thus strengthen the thesis that the identity of early catholic Christianity revolved around a central incarnational narrative. I will attend to the literature regionally wherever possible, traveling through Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, Rome, and then exploring other writings for which the provenance is ambiguous.

Because Ignatius himself did not include every element of his six-movement incarnational narrative in each of his letters, it would be uncritical to apply it too rigorously as a standard against which to judge the christological narratives of other individual texts. That is, if Ignatius himself did not consistently mention every element of the narrative he undoubtedly held, we must not hold other authors to the same high standard—especially if their purposes are less doctrinally oriented or christologically focused. However, there are central components of Ignatius's six-movement narrative that appear to dominate his treatment, and these therefore seem to be of central importance for Ignatius's understanding of Christ's

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[24] This survey will not include catholic writings reported to have existed by later fathers or fragmentary quotations. I have also excluded apocryphal writings likely originating from the second half of the second century (150 CE or later), as these cannot usually be connected with an earlier local community or individual. I will be including discussions for all except the *Fragments of Papias* and *Letter to Diognetus*, the former being too little, the latter being too late (Horacio E. Lona, *An Diognet: Übersetzt und erklärt*, Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten, ed. Norbert Brox et al., vol. 8 [Freiburg: Herder, 2001], 65). Among second century apocrypha that seem to meet the criteria for an early date and regional designation, I have included the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Gospel of Peter*, and *The Odes of Solomon*.

person and work. These include an incarnational union with true fleshly humanity, the suffering and death of Christ, and the resurrection of a fleshly body.[25] If an incarnational narrative similar to that of Ignatius stands behind the theology, paraenesis, and polemics of other early Christian texts, we should at least expect to see these same central elements functioning in ways similar to their roles in Ignatius's letters.

Another observation one makes when comparing the elements of the narrative within each of Ignatius's individual writings to his full incarnational narrative seen in *Ephesians* and *Magnesians* is that though each writing may not contain every element of the whole narrative, *none of the texts explicitly rejects one of these elements*. His verbal expressions and emphases indeed vary, but his portrayal of the person and work of Jesus Christ remains internally coherent. This may serve as another point of determining either consistency or departure from the incarnational narrative in other early Christian writings. If they explicitly deny certain elements of the narrative as expressed synthetically by Ignatius, we may conclude that they represent a form of Christianity whose center differed either slightly or significantly from that of Ignatius and his circle. However, it must be emphasized that failure of a text to positively affirm an element of the incarnational narrative or failure to utilize the same language or imagery as Ignatius does not itself constitute a rejection of the missing narrative element. Ignatius's own letters demonstrate that different aspects of the narrative can be exluded in a particular writing without indicating disagreement with elements that are left unmentioned.

In light of this pattern of conformity and congruity within the Ignatian corpus itself, I will approach other texts in the following chapters by both examining the explicit movements of the incarnational narrative in each text as well as determining whether any statements in the texts explicitly reject elements of Ignatius's incarnational narrative. Though a text need not contain all six of these components to be regarded as consistent with the

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[25] Though the bodily resurrection is not explicitly mentioned in Ignatius's letter to Polycarp, it is found in the letter to Polycarp's church quite frequently (*Smyrn.* 1.2; 2; 3.1–2; 6.2; 7.2; 12.2).

incarnational narrative, if a text explicitly rejects one of the movements, the narrative ceases to be incarnational and represents a non-incarnational christological narrative. Also, in the examination of these writings, special attention must also be given to the crux of Ignatius's narrative—the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. On this basis the catholic texts of the late first and early second centuries will be evaluated as to their compatibility and nearness to the incarnational narrative of Ignatius of Antioch.

Because this investigation covers a broad range of diverse texts with specific questions, my survey will necessarily be limited in detail. Interaction with secondary sources must be focused on critical interpretational issues. I must also assume that the readers have some level of familiarity with these texts and their introductory issues.

CHAPTER 10. THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN SYRIA

I begin my examination of evidence for the incarnational narrative beyond the writings of Ignatius of Antioch in the Syrian bishop's homeland.[1] In this chapter I will examine several works that were regarded by early catholic Christians as belonging to their tradition as 'catholic' writings during the second century.[2] These writings include *The Didache*, *The Gospel of Peter*, and *Odes of Solomon*.

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[1] For secular and doctrinal histories of Antioch, see Charles Kingsley Barrett, 'Christocentricity at Antioch,' in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift: Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums*, ed. Christof Landmesser, Hans-Joachim Eckstein, and Hermann Lichtenberger, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese, vol. 86 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 323–39; Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, eds, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, Yale Publications in Religion, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria: From Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Michelle Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 244 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003); Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[2] Whether these writings were originally part of competing communities that were later adopted by catholic Christians is an interesting question, but impossible to answer apart from presuppositions regarding either unity or diversity in early Christianity. So, I will focus primarily on those writings that likely arose in the late first or early second

THE DIDACHE

The *Didache* is commonly regarded as a composite work which brings together various texts and traditions developed over the course of several decades.[3] A common account of its composition suggests that an early 'two ways' treatise was edited into a Christian baptismal catechism with the addition of distinctively Christian *logia* (*Did.* 1.1–6.3). To this the Didachist added a liturgical section regulating the rites of baptism and the eucharist (7.1–10.7). A section on discipline and discernment was also incorporated (11.1–15.4), as well as a brief concluding section on eschatological expectations.[4]

Though in the past many scholars have typically dated the current redacted form of the *Didache* to the early part of the second

century and have a strong likelihood of having been utilized by those teachers or communities that regarded themselves as in the apostolic and catholic tradition. See Richard A. Norris, Jr., 'The Apostolic and Sub-apostolic Writings: The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers,' in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

[3] On the nature and date of *Didache*, see the helpful summary of scholarship in F. E. Vokes, 'Life and Order in an Early Church: The Didache,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 216–18, 30–31. For a comprehensive survey of answers to the question of the genre of the *Didache*, see Nancy Pardee, *The Genre and Development of the* Didache, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, series 2, vol. 339, ed. Jörg Frey (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 5–52. For arguments on the unity of *Didache* see Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E.* (New York: Newman, 2003).

[4] See Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, vol. 1, *From Paul to the Age of Constantine* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 126–28; Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 1.

century,[5] there has been a trend toward dating the completed form of the text sometime in the latter half of the first century, perhaps as early as 50 to 70 CE,[6] but fairly confidently before about 100.[7] If the majority of scholars are correct in seeing the provenance of the *Didache* as Syria,[8] this would reflect a particular understanding of the incarnational narrative in the life of the Christian communities in that region at about the time of Ignatius's bishopric.[9] One

[5] Leslie W. Barnard, *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1967), 99; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, *1 Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache*, Loeb Classical Library, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 411; Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 128.

[6] See Jean-Paul Audet, *La Didachè: Instructions des Apôtres*, Etudes bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1958), 187–206; Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life*; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 96–100, 322–27. In 2010 O'Loughlin accurately noted, 'The broad consensus today is for a first-century date. This could be as early as 50 … or as late as 80 or 90' (Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], 26).

[7] See Marcello Del Verme, *Didache and Judaism: Jewish Roots of an Ancient Christian-Jewish Work* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 5; Rordorf and Tuilier, eds, *La doctrine des douze apôtres (Didachè)*, 94–97, 232–233; or, as Audet puts it, 'une date plus haute que le IIᵉ siècle' (*La Didachè*, 187). Dating the *Didache* in the first century is not, of course, a new suggestion (see Joseph Langen, 'Das älteste christliche Kirchenbuch,' *Historische Zeitschrift* 53.2 [1885]: 193–214).

[8] Draper notes that 'it is now widely accepted that the text originates from the general area of Syria, or more narrowly from Antioch' (Jonathan A. Draper, 'The *Didache*,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster [London: T. & T. Clark, 2007], 15).

[9] See Audet, *La Didachè*, 206–210; Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 128; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1962), 37; Rordorf and Tuilier, eds, *La doctrine des douze apôtres*, 97–99; J. J. Thierry, '"Jezus de Heer" bij Clemens Romanus en in de Didache,' *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 45 (1962): 3; Huub van de Sandt and David

cannot, however, assume that *Didache* came from Ignatius's particular community in Antioch itself.[10]

It is often asserted that, in contrast to the high christology and incarnational paradoxes found in Ignatius's writings, the *Didache* has a low christology.[11] Grant lists the *Didache*—along with *1 Clement* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*—as examples of Jewish Christian writings that do not call Jesus 'God.'[12] Similarly, Vermes pointedly notes all of the elements lacking in the 'rudimentary Christology' of the *Didache*:

Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and Its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity*, Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, Section 3: Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature, ed. P. J. Tomson, vol. 5 (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2002), 50–52. Ehrman notes, 'It is probably impossible to say where the document was produced' (*The Apostolic Fathers 1*, 412). Likewise, Niederwimmer writes, 'Regarding provenance, we are completely in the dark,' though his statement is actually mitigated by his illuminating discussion that lands softly on Syrian-Palestinian soil (Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 53–54). For a helpful survey on both date and provenance of the *Didache*, see Clayton N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Supplements to Vigiliae christianae, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 3–17.

[10] If one presupposes a model of early Christianity characterized by diversity and conflict, one may read *Didache* as evidence for diverse traditions of a community separate from Igantius's. However, I will show that with regard to christology, such a conclusion is not required by the text.

[11] Or *Didache* may represent an earlier stage of Christian development when the communities were primarily concerned with Jesus's teachings (*logia*) rather than teachings about Jesus. See Jonathan A. Draper, 'The Jesus Tradition in the Didache,' in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper, Arbeiten zur Gescichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, vol. 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72–91. On the apparent stages of christological development in the first century, see above, pp. 23–26.

[12] Robert M. Grant, ed., *After the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 13.

> In short, the Jesus of the Didache is essentially the Servant of God, the great eschatological teacher who is expected to reappear soon to gather together and transfer the dispersed members of his church to the Kingdom of God. The ideas of atonement and redemption are nowhere visible in this earliest record for Jewish-Christian life. Nor can one find any hint at the sacrificial character of Jesus' death and its Pauline symbolical re-enactment in the rituals of baptism and the Eucharist. Needless to say, the Johannine idea of the eternal and creative Logos is nowhere on the horizon either.[13]

However, to conclude that the *Didache* reflects a low christology within its originating community is to reach beyond what the evidence will allow.[14] That is, the main concerns in the *Didache* as a document—especially a redacted 'church manual' of some sort[15]—

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[13] Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 147.

[14] In light of the paucity of evidence of a developed christology, Draper characterizes the christology of the *Didache* as 'Davidic' ('The *Didache*,' 18, 20), though even this christology includes the return of Christ from heaven—implying the ascension of Christ to heaven after his earthly ministry. However, the so-called 'Davidic' elements in the christology of the *Didache* are also clearly present in the high christology of Ignatius (*Eph.* 18.2; 20.2; *Trall.* 9.1; *Rom.* 7.3; *Smyrn.* 1.1) and *Barnabas* 12.10. That is, it does not follow that the Davidic elements of the christology of the *Didache* mark it as representing a community with a low christology; it is just as plausible that a full exposition of the person and work of Christ was beyond the purpose of the writing.

[15] The identification of the precise genre and original purpose of the *Didache* still eludes consensus. Many have simply called it a 'church order' (Norris, 'The Apostolic and Sub-apostolic Writings,' 19; compare Philip Schaff, *The Oldest Church Manual Called The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885], 16; Philipp Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, rev. edn [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978], 725; Klaus Wengst, *Didache (Apostellehre), Barnabasbrief, Zweiter Klemensbrief, Schrift an Diognet: Eingeleitet, herausgegeben, übertragen und erläutert* [Munich: Kösel, 1984], 18). Other suggestions include a 'handbook of church morals, ritual, and discipline' (Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 2; also see Hermann-Adolf

cannot be expected to necessarily present a complete portrait of a community's christology.[16] So Niederwimmer remarks:

Stempel, 'Der Lehrer in der *Lehre der zwölf Apostel*,' *Vigiliae christianae* 34 [1980]: 215), a 'community manual' (Robert A. Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, in Robert M. Grant, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 3 [New York: Thomas Nelson, 1965], 3), or a 'catechetical book' (William Varner, *The Way of the Didache: The First Christian Handbook* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007], 58). Moreschini and Norelli simply call it 'a kind of handbook for Christian communities,' saying nothing specific concerning its intended use (*Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 1.126). Scholars often imagine the manual functioning as a means of governing a particular local community in its day-to-day ecclesiastical and religious life (Stephen Finlan, 'Identity in the Didache Community,' in *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford, Early Christianity and Its Literature, vol. 14, ed. Gail R. O'Day [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015], 31; Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 31). Schöllgen argues that the *Didache* was actually written to address controversies and correct specific ecclesiastical problems, not to set forth positively any kind of comprehensive church order (Georg Schöllgen, 'The *Didache* as a Church Order: An Examination of the Purpose for the Composition of the *Didache* and Its Consequences for Interpretation,' in *The* Didache *in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathen A. Draper [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 43–71, esp. 44, 63). Eschewing the general 'church manual' theme, both Milavec and O'Loughlin regard the *Didache* as a guide for a mentor-apprentice relationship; thus the term ἡ διδαχή is understood as 'the training' (Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003], 40; O'Loughlin, *Didache*, 10–13). And lastly, elsewhere I have suggested that the *Didache* was a first-century enchiridion for newly appointed leaders of newly established churches, likely arising in the midst of Antioch's missionary efforts somtime in the latter half of the first century, though the original authorship, audience, and purpose are of less significance than the general date (see Michael J. Svigel, 'A First Century DIY Manual? *Didache* as a Practical Enchiridion for Early Church Plants,' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 174, no. 693 (2017).

[16] Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, 65.

> There are passing and sometimes implicit details that make
> clear what the teaching and views of the Didachist (or the
> Didachist's sources) were; but it would be wrong to try to
> construct a 'theology' of the Didachist from those details. The
> teaching and views of the Didachist cannot be reduced to what
> emerges, en passant and implicitly, from this writing. The same
> is a fundamental objection to all attempts to determine the
> 'theology' of the *Didache* and to distinguish it from others. …
> Such attempts violate the principle that forbids direct
> comparison of texts that indicate different levels of
> reflection.[17]

In short, the *Didache* is not a christological treatise, a Christian
apology, a paraenetic epistle, or a Christian homily—all of which
could be expected to reflect the central concerns of a community
to a larger degree than a church manual of liturgy, order, or
discipline. One must therefore be careful not to hold the *Didache* to
a standard of christological reflection its authors or editors never
intended to meet.

Though one cannot easily divine the precise theology of the
Didachist or his community, one may still ask specific questions
regarding the incarnational narrative already seen quite clearly in
the writings of Ignatius of Antioch in an attempt to determine
whether or not Ignatius's views of Christ's person and work would
have been acceptable to the Didachist and vice versa. In the end,
this may be the limit of the evidence afforded by the *Didache*.[18] The
previous considerations of its mixed genre and unfocused purposes
notwithstanding, I intend to demonstrate that the *Didache* does
afford a veiled and imperfect glimpse of certain components of the
incarnational narrative, understanding that parts of its content likely

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[17] Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 2.

[18] I acknowledge that in light of the evidential demands of my thesis,
I probably run the risk of both consciously and unconsciously reading
Ignatius's christology into the dark cracks and silent crevices of the
Didache's virtually Christless contents. I am, however, almost certain that
Christ is not as absent from the community or the manual as is often
suggested.

preserve liturgical and didactic traditions that may significantly predate the period of the early second century.

In *Did.* 4.1, we read, 'My child, night and day remember the one who preaches to you the word of God, and honor him as you would the Lord, for wherever the lordship is preached (ἡ κυριότης λαλεῖται), the Lord is there (ἐκεῖ κύριος ἐστιν).' As in much early Christian literature at this time, 'Lord' here refers to Jesus Christ.[19] The κυριότης of Christ likely refers to the lordship, majesty, or power of Christ by virtue of being 'Lord.'[20] The *Didache* thus appealed to Jesus's lordship to strengthen church order, an analogy

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[19] Vermes, in fact, suggests, 'There is no equivocation with the title "Lord". It is encountered twenty times, always relating to Jesus, never to the heavenly Father' (Vermes, *Christian Beginnings*, 146). For a contrary opinion, see Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life*, 663–66. Yet many of Milavec's readings appear forced, as, for example, his understanding of 'pray as the Lord ordered' preceding the Lord's prayer in *Did.* 8.2: 'It is unclear whether this is what Jesus ordered or what God ordered. When it is remembered that Jesus proclaims the "good news of God" and that those who hear him, hear the Lord God, then it does not seem strange to attribute to the Lord God a rule of praying' (ibid., 664–65). It appears to me that only the mention of the name 'Jesus' would be enough to satisfy Milavec's standard of clarity, and that he has determined that 'Lord' refers to God unless the evidence meets an arbitrarily high burden of proof. Yet in the case of *Did.* 8.2, Milavec's arguments regarding mediation of Jesus for God could be used in favor of regarding 'Lord' as a reference to Jesus, perhaps even as an appellation of exaltation. Given the marked use of κύριος for Jesus prior to 70 CE (see Mt 7:21; 22:45; 24:42; Mk 2:28; 12:37), as well the many examples in the Pauline letters (see especially 'Lord' as an appellation distinguishing Jesus from God the Father in 1 Cor 8:6), Milavec's conclusions seem unwarranted even given his early date of *Didache* between 50 and 70 CE.

[20] See Walter Bauer et al., eds, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. κυριότης. It is used in Herm. *Sim.* 5.6.1 in the context of contrasting the Son of God as appearing in the 'manner of a slave' (δούλου τρόπον) with his actual position of 'power and great might' (ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην … καὶ κυριότητα). See Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 105.

that bears some resemblance to Ignatius's appeal to the relationship of the Son and the Father as well as the sending of the Son as an example of submission to the bishop and presbyters.[21]

Also, the Lord Jesus was regarded as the center of the church's preaching and constituted the presence of the Lord. Niederwimmer notes, 'Thus the *Didache* text means that the place from which the proclamation about the κυριότης of Jesus goes forth is at the same time the place of his presence. There, in the mouth of the teacher and in his teaching, the *Kyrios* himself is present.'[22] One cannot help but recall Ignatius's assertion in *Smyrnaeans* 8.2: 'Wherever the bishop may appear, there let the gathering be; just as wherever Christ Jesus may be, there is the catholic church.'[23] If Ignatius were aware of this saying found in the *Didache*—or a similar tradition—our understanding of Ignatius's meaning regarding the presence of Christ becomes more clear: he primarily meant the proper preaching concerning the Jesus Christ. In the perspective of the *Didache*, preaching 'God's word' referred to the message concerning Christ, and this preaching constituted the presence of Christ in the congregation. Thus, the *Didache* was quite close to Ignatius's own assertion, which appealed to the preaching of the 'word,' 'message,' or 'gospel' as the identifying mark of authentic Christianity.

The *Didache* also said that if a teacher taught so as to increase 'righteousness and knowledge of the Lord' (δικαιοσύνην καὶ γνῶσιν κυρίου), he was to be received 'as the Lord (*Did.* 11.2).[24] Here again

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[21] See *Eph.* 6.1; *Trall.* 2.1.

[22] Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 105.

[23] See discussion above, pp. 155–158. Of the various alleged connections between Ignatius and the *Didache* cited by Jefford, none include the possible conceptual parallel between *Did.* 4.1 and Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.2 (Clayton N. Jefford, ed., *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History, and Transmission*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 77 [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 342–51).

[24] I am unsatisfied with Milvec's reasons for excluding a reference to Christ in the phrase 'knowledge of the Lord.' He regards the 'knowledge' as 'first and foremost "knowledge of the Lord God" and not "knowledge of Lord Jesus" as some … have wrongly supposed,' and suggests the

the 'knowledge of the Lord' was exalted to a high place as a mark of true teaching in the church. Niederwimmer sets it in these terms: 'Both "righteousness" and "knowledge" are, for the Didachist, the descriptive terms for the "essence" of the new faith. This new faith brings with it specific knowledge (namely, of the Lord), and that in turn creates the new righteousness that is characteristic of the new society. Hence, for a teacher who increases righteousness and knowledge, the command is to "receive him as the Lord."'[25]

Also, the baptismal pronouncement, 'in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit' suggests some relationship of at least functional harmony between these three persons (*Did.* 7.3), as it did already in New Testament literature (see Mt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:2). This baptismal formula, however, does not clarify the particular relationships between the three persons. It may imply

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content of the 'knowledge' in primarily '(a) discerning the true God, the Father; (b) discerning the Father's Way of Life; and (c) discerning the Father's guarantee of his future kingdom' (Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life*, 436). I regard this as an unacceptable reading of the text for several reasons. First, it fails to pass the eucharistic test, as the 'all these things' (ταῦτα πάντα) which a teacher was to teach refers back to the revelation of the Father through Jesus specifically in the context of the eucharistic celebration (*Did.* 9–10). In this eucharistic context of the meal commemorating the Lord (1 Cor 11:24–27), a didactic purpose focused almost exclusively on God the Father apart from the revelatory mediation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ seems to miss the mark. Second, Milavec's reading seems to forget that regardless of its Jewish-Christian background, the *Didache* is, after all, a Christian document, not a work for converts to Judaism, so instruction regarding 'knowledge of the Lord' would by necessity include the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ's revelation of the Lord God (see, for example, 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 1:17–23; 4:13). Third, it fails to take into account other early Christian admonitions that parallel submission to authority with submission to the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5:24; 6:5–7; Col 3:22–24; Ign. *Eph.* 6.1; *Trall.* 2.1). Thus, as it is read outside a narrow syntactical context and apart from the unwarranted presupposition that κύριος must normally mean 'Lord God' unless clearly indicated, I must reject Milavec's interpretation as unlikely.

[25] Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 172.

a proto-triune identification and thus a high christological awareness, but there is no way to validate this.[26] However, *Didache* does indicate that in the liturgical prayer following the eucharist, the church pronounced, 'Maranatha,' a statement that, in Aramaic, refers to Jesus as 'Lord' in an exalted or perhaps even divine sense.[27] Again, we are functioning with possibilities here, the probabilities of which are debatable. Certainly, *Didache* could be read this way, but it is uncertain whether it should be so interpreted. While the question of the deity of Christ in the community of the *Didache* is left unanswered, the question of his humanity is more clear. Christ is regarded as having a human lineage, as he is called 'the holy vine of David' (*Did.* 9.2). Thus, *Didache* is certainly not docetic in its christology.

Betz points out a glaring omission in the eucharistic instruction of *Didache* 9–10 that has a direct relationship to an investigation of the incarnational narrative: 'The typical concepts like body (flesh), blood, covenant, together with an explicit

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[26] The possibility that the name 'God of David' in *Did.* 10.6 refers to Christ as θεός is unlikely. See Ben Witherington, *The Many Faces of the Christ: The Christologies of the New Testament and Beyond*, Companions to the New Testament (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 229. Assuming θεῷ is original here (see variants in Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992], 14), there is no reason to conclude that the 'God of David' refers to Christ rather than to the Lord God, as it does in Ps 118:25. Draper, in fact, prefers the reading of the Coptic text, 'house of David' (Draper, 'The *Didache*,' 18), seeing this as evidence of a lingering 'Davidic Christology.'

[27] See 1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20. On early Christian use of *maranatha* as an address of praise, possibly (though not clearly) in reference to Jesus as Yahweh, see Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, rev. edn (London: SCM, 1963), 199–214; Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, 'New Testament Kyrios and Maranatha and Their Aramaic Background,' in *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 218–35; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970; reprint, 1981), 121–24; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 110–11.

reference to the death of Jesus typical there, are missing in the Didache.'[28] Yet the force of the silence is somewhat lightened upon a closer examination of the text of *Didache* 9–10, for there are indications that much is already assumed concerning the eucharistic celebration and that the instructions of this writing relate to specific practical—not general theological—issues.[29] *Didache* 9.1 begins, περὶ δὲ τῆς εὐχαριστία, apparently presupposing an understanding of this rite among its readers. The instructions then addressed a specific form of thanksgiving prayer πρῶτον περὶ τοῦ ποτηρίου (9.2) and then περὶ δὲ τοῦ κλάσματος (9.3). The main issue addressed by this text is not the christological or redemptive meaning of the eucharist, but the prescribed prayers that accompanied the rite. However, certain elements in the prayers suggest an assumed redemptive and christological background.[30] In fact, Mazza writes, 'The two texts of the *Didache* [9 and 10] are profoundly Christological.'[31] One can imagine an incarnational

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[28] Johannes Betz, 'The Eucharist in the Didache,' in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper, Arbeiten zur Gesichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, vol. 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 248–49.

[29] The question of whether *Did.* 9–10 reflects an early eucharistic celebration of the Lord's Supper, an *agape* meal, or some combination of these, is a matter of no little discussion in scholarshipon the historical context and background of the *Didache*. I conclude, with many scholars, that a true eucharistic celebration of the Lord's Supper is evident in this passage, though I do not rule out the possibility that vestiges of an older or contemporary love feast may also be resident within the text as we have it, perhaps in the historical context of a post-baptismal Easter eucharist. See See Willy Rordorf, 'Die Mahlgebete in Didache Kap. 9–10: ein neuer Status quaestionis,' *Vigiliae christianae* 51 (1997): 229–46; Gerard Rouwhorst, 'Didache 9–10: A Litmus Test for the Research on Early Christian Liturgy Eucharist,' in *Matthew and the Didache: Two Documents from the Same Jewish-Christian Milieu?*, ed. Huub van de Sandt (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2005), 147; Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 296–329.

[30] Betz, 'The Eucharist in the Didache,' 253.

[31] Enrico Mazza, 'Didache 9–10: Elements of a Eucharistic Interpretation,' in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper,

narrative standing in the background of the language concerning Christ's mediation as an essential (though not exhaustive or exlusive) component of the incarnational narrative. Betz notes, 'The texts of the *Didache* in no way exclude the report of the institution [of the Lord's Supper]. They indeed only offer a part, not the whole, of what was spoken at the celebration, and draw more from the prayer response of the community than the liturgy which recited the account of the institution.'[32]

Yet Betz perceives an even deeper christological background to the eucharistic prayers in *Didache* 9–10 which directly centers on the incarnational narrative. In fact, he relates the traditional background indirectly to Johannine traditions, suggesting that the Gospel of John drew from similar eucharistic prayers and formulations as that of the *Didache* tradition: 'What the *Didache* says preliminarily and briefly, is amplified, clarified, and more strongly Christologized in the Fourth Gospel.'[33]

Betz then presents an argument for an Old Testament wisdom background that sets the theological imagery of *Didache* 9–10 aglow. He suggests that the community of the *Didache* understood the significance of their meal in light of Old Testament references to God's revelation as food and drink (Ps 16:5; Isa 55:1–3; Jer 15:16): 'The observation, that in the late period of the Old Testament revelation was categorized as Wisdom and viewed as a meal, leads us still closer to the *Didache*. Wisdom … is, on the one hand, identified with the Torah (Sir 24:23; Bar 4:1), but is, on the other hand, seen as proclaimer and revealer (Pr 1–9; Sir 24:8f; Bar 3:38) and personified (Wisd 7–9).'[34]

Betz then relates the motif of Wisdom's descent and its association to wine, bread, and a meal to the eucharistic meal of the *Didache* as well as the incarnational and eucharistic imagery of John 6. He concludes:

Arbeiten zur Gesichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, vol. 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 296.

[32] Betz, 'The Eucharist in the Didache,' 254; Schöllgen, 'The *Didache* as a Church Order,' 43–45, 50, 63.

[33] Betz, 'The Eucharist in the Didache,' 256.

[34] Ibid., 256–57.

> The theology coming to expression in *Didache* 9–10 thus has
> … done the same in the cast of the eucharistic meal as also is
> to be confirmed for the most ancient Christology: in both a
> secret is illuminated by means of Old Testament Wisdom
> teaching, in the one case the sacrament, in the other case the
> person of Jesus; so a Wisdom Christology is also developed
> and with its help, for example, the pre-existence of Jesus is
> brought to consciousness.[35]

He also sees specific incarnational imagery in the κατασκηνοῦν of
the 'holy name' in the hearts of those partaking of the eucharist
(*Did.* 10.2),[36] concluding that the 'name' refers to Jesus, and
connecting the use of κατεσκήνωσας to the incarnation:

> The root σκηνοῦν describes the incarnate existence of the
> Logos in John 1:14, so that (κατα)σκηνοῦν reveals an
> incarnationally oriented perspective. On the basis of *Didache*
> 10:2, the eucharist is recognizable as the sacramental descent
> and indwelling of Jesus in the heart of human beings, and
> indeed, since the saying serves as thanks for the meal, by
> means of the food. … In the *Didache* the present eucharistic
> indwelling of Jesus is fairly clearly expressed (10:2).[37]

Betz could be criticized for his reliance on a complex quiltwork of
diverse texts and traditions, to which the *Didache* community may
not have been familiar.[38] Yet his attempt to link the eucharistic
prayers of the *Didache* to incarnational motifs similar to those seen
in John demonstrates that one cannot rule out the possibility that

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[35] Ibid., 257–58.

[36] But see the arguments for placing this imagery in a Hellenistic
Jewish tradition in Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 323–24.

[37] Betz, 'The Eucharist in the Didache,' 270–71.

[38] Mazza argues for a 'full sacramentality' of the eucharistic liturgy in
Did. 9–10, placing it in the context of a developing Christian tradition
grounded in earlier Jewish liturgical forms. Though he does not speculate
about incarnational or Wisdom christology backgrounds, he does suggest
the eucharistic prayers in *Did.* 9–10 are 'Christocentric' (Mazza, 'Didache
9–10,' 276–99).

the incarnational narrative had made a mark on the community by the time of the document's redaction around 100 CE. Nevertheless, Betz's arguments from the 'history of ideas' perspective are not the only evidences of the presence of incarnational components.[39]

Didache 14.1–3 suggests some concept of Jesus as divine and some background of the incarnational narrative. Sunday was called 'the Lord's own day' (14.1), and we can assume this was the similar term we see in other early Christian writings on the day the Lord was raised from the dead. This gathering to break bread and give thanks (κλάσατε ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσατε) is referred to as a 'sacrifice' (ἡ θυσία), which may indicate the eucharistic meal as a reenactment and commemoration of the sacrificial death of Christ, as it had been instituted (see 1 Cor 11:24–26).

In any case, we also find in the various prayers for eucharistic worship a repetition of Jesus as Servant of God (παῖς).[40] In several passages Jesus is portrayed as the one through whom (διά) God mediates his saving knowledge and gifts of grace.[41] Also, God's glory and power are 'through Jesus Christ forever,' indicating either a movement toward God in worship or a demonstration of God's power and glory through the mediation of Christ (10.4). We also

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[39] The addition of the prayer over the anointing found in *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.27 and the Coptic British Library MS Or9271 may suggest a post-baptismal chrismation perhaps hinted at in Ign. *Eph.* 17.1–2. However, for Ignatius's image of anointing with the Spirit, see above, p. 81, nn. 35–36. It is unclear whether this prayer presents an ealier tradition removed from the text or a later addition. In any case, its inclusion or omission does not directly affect my own arguments here. See Alastair H. B. Logan, 'Post-Baptismal Chrismation in Syria: The Evidence of Ignatius, The Didache and the Apostolic Constitutions,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1998): 92–108; Paul A. Mirecki and F. Stanley Jones, 'Considerations on the Coptic Papyrus of the Didache (British Library Oriental Manuscript 9271,' in *The Didache in Context*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 77 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 47–87.

[40] *Did.* 9.2, 3; 10.2, 3; compare *1 Clem.* 59.2, 3, 4; Acts 4:27; Isa 41:8–9; 42:1; 44:1–2; 49:6; 52:13.

[41] *Did.* 9.2, 3; 10.2, 3.

know the author of the *Didache* expected that the Lord would come on the clouds (16.1). Along with his coming would also be the 'resurrection of the dead' (16.6). This brief reference to the eschatological expectation of resurrection provides a glimpse of what the community would have held regarding Christ's own resurrection. N. T. Wright notes, 'That it affirms the resurrection, as part of a theology of a coming kingdom of god, means that, though the doctrine is not central to the document …, it is another witness to the same theology that we find in Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp and of course the New Testament itself.'[42]

In sum, the situation with regard to the incarnational narrative in the *Didache*, is as follows. There is nothing in the *Didache* that either explicitly or implicitly rejects an incarnational narrative. At the same time, there are several possible implicit references that may point to an incarnational christology. While the text is silent on the issue of the pre-incarnate origin and incarnational union of the Son,[43] the true birth and life of the incarnate Son is made clear by the reference to Christ as the 'holy vine of David' (*Did.* 9.2). Also, the true suffering and death of Christ is implied by the reference to the eucharistic celebration as a 'sacrifice' (θυσία) in 14.1–3. The bodily resurrection of Christ likely stood behind the celebration of 'the Lord's own day' (14.1) and its nature is confirmed by the community's belief in the eschatological resurrection (16.6). The heavenly assumption of Christ is implied by the appellation *maranatha* in 10.6 and by the description of his return from heaven (16.1). Furthermore, the *Didache* also regards the proper teaching and preaching concerning Christ to be vital function of the community: 'for wherever the lordship is preached, the Lord is there' (4.1). If the content of this preaching was not the narrative as

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[42] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 489.

[43] The pre-incarnate existence of the exalted Son/Logos may be implied in the personified Wisdom background in *Did.* 9–10 (see Betz, 'The Eucharist in the Didache,' 257–58). The incarnational union of the Son/Logos with fleshly humanity may be implied by the use of κατεσκήνωσας in *Did.* 10.2 (ibid., 270–71).

sketched above, *Didache* has no indication of any other christological content.

It should be obvious that with regard to the *Didache* we have nothing as clear and potent as the incarnational narrative repeatedly affirmed in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. But it would be misleading to conclude that the *Didache* exhibits a 'low christology.' While there are several possible indicators that the Didachist had an exalted notion of Christ in his past, present, and future functions in the economy of God (*Did.* 4.1; 7.1, 3; 10.6; 16.1), we find nothing in the text that would indicate the author or community of the *Didache* regarded the Christ as exclusively a human agent. Ultimately with regard to the testimony of *Didache*, we are peering through a veil at an incomplete picture. However, the evidence from *Didache* is not entirely neutral, for it at least seems to offer up a Christ with a true human lineage and real historical bodily existence. Such a perspective would rule out a monophysite docetism which seems to have been at least one of the opponents combated by Ignatius of Antioch. Due to the nature and purpose of the *Didache* as a church manual, however, we must be satisfied with its limited and in many ways inconclusive data.

Figure 11: Elements of the incarnational narrative in the *Didache*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	
2) Incarnational union	
3) Birth and life	*Did.* 9.2
4) Suffering and death	*Did.* 14.1–3
5) Bodily resurrection	*Did.* 14.1; 16.6
6) Heavenly assumption	*Did.* 10.6; 16.1

THE GOSPEL OF PETER

Though some may doubt whether the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* should be categorized as a 'catholic' document, I include it as evidence of the unity and diversity of early catholic Christianity for several reasons.[44] First, it was probably written sometime around 125 CE, and therefore provides evidence for the period of interest in this study.[45] Second, it may have been in use in the vicinity of Antioch in the first half of the second century by a community regarded as having held 'the true faith.'[46] Third, the testimony of

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[44] For a recent and thorough critical edition of the text of the *Gos. Pet.*, see Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, eds, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, vol. 1, *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse: Die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englisher Übersetzung*, Die Griechischen Christlichen Shriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, vol. 11 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 1–77. The Greek text and English translation used here were taken from this work. Citations refer to the lines rather than to section numbers.

[45] C. H. Turner regarded a date between 115 and 130 to be most probable ('The Gospel of Peter,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 14 [1913]: 164). Mara places it only slightly more broadly 'dans la première moitié du IIᵉ siècle' (Maria Grazia Mara, *Évangile de Pierre*, Sources chrétiennes, vol. 201 [Paris: Cerf, 2006], 215). This early part of the second century also considers the occurrence of the optative voice in *Gos. Pet.* 14, which does not appear to have been used in koine Greek prior to the second century, thus establishing the *terminus ad quo* (Franz Weißengruber, 'Zur Datierung des Petrusevangeliums,' in *Das Petrusevangelium*, ed. Albert Fuchs, vol. 1, Studien zum Neuentestament und seiner Umwelt, ed. Albert Fuchs, vol. B.2, *Die Griechischen Apokryphen zum neuen Testament* [Linz: SNTU, 1978], 119–20). This approximate date generally conforms to Serapion's own testimony from the end of the second century that he obtained the *Gos. Pet.* 'from the successors of those who first used it' (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.12.6), suggesting that it had come from at least the previous generation, that is, the early second century.

[46] Eusebius noted that near the end of the second century Serapion of Antioch discovered the *Gos. Pet.* in use 'in the parish of Rhossus' several miles from Antioch (Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.2). We cannot be certain when or from where it arrived in the region of Antioch, but it appears to

Serapion of Antioch (via Eusebius) reveals that this text had been judged to be 'in accordance with the true teaching of the Savior, but some things are additions to that teaching' (Eus., *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.6) according to late second century standards. Thus, the *Gospel of Peter* provides a window into the type of christological narrative catholic Christians were willing to tolerate in the early second century, even if the text itself was ultimately rejected by later catholic Christianity.

How does the christology of this gospel compare with the contours of the incarnational narrative that stood at the center of Ignatius's sense of catholic identity? Because of the local and tentative reception of the *Gospel of Peter*, as well as its eventual rejection as apocryphal, one would expect that this writing would contain various components of the incarnational narrative, but that its language would be ambiguous and susceptible to various interpretations. Indeed, this kind of uncertainty concerning the text is what Serapion of Antioch himself discovered when he first reviewed the document for the community in Rhossus at the end of the second century.[47] After learning that it had been used by

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have enjoyed a traditional reception among Christians in that region. Turner wrote, 'Serapion himself had never met with this Gospel; but the fact that its use at Rhossus was, as it appeared, tradition inclined him in its favour' ('The Gospel of Peter,' 163). Even if *Gos. Pet.* originally came from Asia Minor (Egypt is unlikely), its reception and use in Syria by a community of late second century catholic Christians (by Serapion's standards) suggests that it in some way reflected the character of Christianity in that region earlier in the century. On the place of the redaction of *Gos. Pet.*, see Mara, *Évangile de Pierre*, 216–18; Léon Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 2d edn, Etudes bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1930), 179.

[47] Eusebius quoted Serapion's letter to Rhossus thus: 'When I visited you I supposed that all of you held the true faith, and as I had not read the Gospel which they put forward under the name of Peter, I said, If this is the only thing which occasions dispute among you, let it be read. But now having learned, from what has been told me, that their mind was involved in some heresy, I will hasten to come to you again. Therefore, brethren, expect me shortly' (*Hist. eccl.* 6.12.4).

docetic teachers, Serapion apparently examined the document more closely and found some problematic passages.

This same ambiguity of interpretation prevailed even in the earliest studies of the *Gospel of Peter* after the publication of the Akhmim Codex fragment in 1892.[48] Indeed, some early estimations of the christology of the *Gospel of Peter* regarded it as 'definitely Docetic.'[49] Since then, however, others have regarded the account of the crucifixion and resurrection with less severity.[50] In fact, N. T. Wright notes, 'There is nothing in the *Gospel of Peter* to suggest that it comes from a gnostic setting. … Though Serapion had heard that some parts of it were being used in support of a docetic Christology, it does not demand to be read this way.'[51]

A closer examination of the text itself reveals ambiguous language, demonstrating how readers with a presupposed incarnational narrative could interpret the text favorably as well as those with docetic proclivities.[52] Already in the opening lines of this document, Pilate and Herod are participating together in the sentencing of Christ,[53] and in the *Gospel of Peter* 6, the soldiers

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[48] For a brief overview of approaches to the interpretation of the *Gos.Pet.* see Peter M. Head, 'On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter,' *Vigiliae christianae* 46 (1992): 209–10.

[49] Turner, 'The Gospel of Peter,' 163.

[50] J. W. McCant, 'The Gospel of Peter: Docetism Reconsidered,' *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 258–73.

[51] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 595. See Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, 114.

[52] Mara writes, 'Il est clair que, précisément par suite de cette synthèse de la mort avec la gloire, le texte se prêtait aussi à une interprétation gnostique' (*Évangile de Pierre*, 219). However, this interpretation is not demanded by the text itself, regardless of the original intent of the redactor.

[53] Interestingly, Ignatius's own summary of the incarnational narrative in *Smyrn.* 1.2 says that Jesus was 'truly nailed in the flesh for us under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch.' This pairing of Herod and Pilate may represent an early traditional iteration of the narrative that was later shortened to an emphasis on Pilate alone, as we see in the later Roman Symbol and orthodox creeds. This may indicate that the original

declared, 'Let us drag away the Son of God because we have got power over him.' As they mocked and scourged him, they said, 'With this honour let us honour the Son of God' (*Gos. Pet.* 9). The Roman mocking turned to reverence by the end of the narrative, however, when the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb reported to Pilate, 'In truth he was the Son of God (ἀληθῶς υἱὸς ἦν θεοῦ)' (*Gos. Pet.* 45), to which Pilate responded, 'I am clean of the blood of the Son of God (τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ)' (*Gos. Pet.* 46).

Though these are historically unlikely ascriptions, by the early second century the title 'Son of God' probably reflected the author's belief concerning the divinity of Christ rather than merely a Messianic title, which was the likely meaning of the use of 'Son of God' in the synoptic writings.[54] Though the phrase 'blood of the Son of God' is less shocking than Ignatius's 'blood of God' (*Eph.* 1.1), its significance for the doctrine of the incarnation in Syria should not be overlooked, as it would be a difficult passage to interpret in conformity with a docetic christology, either monophysite or dyophysite.

At the *Gospel of Peter* 10 we encounter this ambiguous statement: 'And they brought two malefactors and crucified the Lord between them. But he was silent as if he felt no pain (αὐτὸς δὲ ἐσιώπα ὡς μηδένα πόνον ἔχων).' The first part of this sentence suggests that the author viewed Jesus as truly having been crucified, but if ὡς … ἐχῶν is taken as causal, 'because he had no pain,' the phrase would contradict the incarnational narrative, in which the incarnate Son truly suffered.[55] Turner reads the text decisively in this direction, noting, 'His account of the Crucifixion and Resurrection is definitely Docetic. Christ suffers neither pain nor death; and seeing that He did not die, He could not, of course, in

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provenance of the *Gos. Pet.* as western Syria may be most plausible.

[54] Mara, *Évangile de Pierre*, 194.

[55] Kraus and Nicklas translate the phrase 'als hätte er keinen Schmerz,' but note that the text could be translated, 'weil er keinen Schmerz hatte' (*Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, 35). Similarly, Mara translates the phrase, 'comme s'il n'éprouvait aucune souffrance' (*Évangile de Pierre*, 47).

any literal sense rise again from the dead.'[56] Yet this negative appraisal seems to move too far into the realm of assumption. For if the passage means Christ's silence was such that it appeared to others that he had no pain (when, in fact, he did), then it is a statement of his patient endurance in suffering and thus in keeping with the incarnational narrative.[57] This is the position taken by many translators and commentators today.[58] One can see, therefore, how the text could have been read (or misread) in conformity with either an incarnational narrative or a docetic narrative.[59]

At first glance, the account in the *Gospel of Peter* 19–24, appears to portray a real death of Christ: 'And the Lord cried out and said: "My power, power, you have forsaken me." And having said this he was taken up' (*Gos. Pet.* 19). On this passage, Bruce notes: 'It carefully avoids saying that he died, preferring to say that he "was taken up", as though he—or at least his soul or spiritual self—was "assumed" direct from the cross to the presence of God. … Then the cry of dereliction is reproduced in a form which suggests that,

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[56] Turner, 'The Gospel of Peter,' 163.

[57] Mara provides several allusions to the silence of Christ, including Mk 14:61; 15:5; Mt 26:63; Isa 63:7; Lk 23:9; John 19:9; *Odes Sol.* 31:8–12; and Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.35 (*Évangile de Pierre*, 47, n. 3). One might add to this Acts 8:32 and perhaps Ignatius's enigmatic statements regarding Christ's silence in *Eph.* 15.1–2 (see above, pp. 79–80). See Polycarp's silence when injured during his brutal treatment at the hands of the soldiers, ὡς οὐδὲν πεπονθώς (*Mart. Pol.* 8.3). See arguments in Head, 'On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter,' 211–13.

[58] See Mara, *Évangile de Pierre*, 106–08. McCant writes, 'That ὡς is not to be understood causally is evident from the context. Suffering is integral to the "Petrine" passion narrative and silence is a pronounced feature of this narrative, with the Lord speaking only once (GP 5. 19a). Suffering is intended in the scene of derision and the silence of the Lord, while not explicitly stated, is as conspicuous as in the crucifixion scene' ('The Gospel of Peter,' 261).

[59] Mara notes, 'Le passage … est unanimement consideré comme un des plus ambigus' (*Évangile de Pierre*, 108).

at that moment, his divine power left the bodily shell in which it had taken up temporary residence.'[60]

I grant that such a reading of the text is possible, but I do not regard it as probable. The 'taking up' (ἀνελήμφθη) is said to have occurred at the moment of his death, not prior to it, so it may be understood as a euphemism for the spirit's severance from the body at death.[61] Contemporary docetic accounts of the crucifixion usually have the spiritual Christ depart from the suffering Jesus (or his replacement) prior to suffering and crucifixion, not at the very point of death itself. Overall, the account may allow for a dyophysite docetism, but the subtleties of the narrative are such that they are more easily exposited in conformity with an incarnational narrative.

In any case, the account continues with an emphasis on the body of the Lord, not the departed spirit, so that even when the body was removed from the cross and placed on the ground, it shook the earth (*Gos. Pet.* 21). Also, the emphasis on the sepulcher (23–39), including the opening of the tomb, suggests that the author of this document believed in the bodily resurrection. When the women entered the tomb, they found an angel who informed them that the one who had been crucified had risen (55–56). Thus all elements of the passion and resurrection narrative are intact.

To conclude: though the *Gospel of Peter* suddenly begins with the sentencing of Jesus by Herod and Pilate and abruptly cuts off after the resurrection, several components of the remainder of an

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[60] F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), 93.

[61] Head, 'On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter,' 215. The concept of being 'taken up' at death is also seen in *1 Clem.* 5.7. However, ἀναλαμβάνω is, admittedly, the normal word used in the New Testament for the ascension of Christ to heaven, not his death on the cross (Mk 16:19; Acts 1:2, 11, 22; 1 Tim 3:16). Yet in the vision of the resurrection seen by the soldiers, mention is made of preaching to those who sleep (*Gos. Pet.* 41), a likely reference to the descent of Christ to Hades to release the imprisoned souls. This would imply that the narrative does not, in fact, indicate that the spirit of Christ departed immediatley to heaven from the cross.

incarnational narrative are still present, albeit sometimes utilizing ambiguous language. The pre-incarnate existence of the exalted Son/Logos is not asserted as such, though the title 'Son of God' (*Gos. Pet.* 9, 45) seems to suggest a pre-resurrection divine relationship of sonship.[62] The incarnational union of the Son/Logos with fleshly humanity as well as his true suffering and death are evident in the phrase 'blood of the Son of God' (46), and Christ is clearly described as 'crucified' by the angel in line 56. The true fleshly resurrection of the incarnate Son is communicated in line 56, and the emphasis on the empty tomb in which the body had been placed also suggests a bodily resurrection (55–56). Though the narrative uses unique and perhaps ambiguous language, one can safely conclude that the traditional fabric from which this gospel account was cut best reflects an incarnational narrative similar to that of Ignatius of Antioch in all its central movements.

Figure 12: Elements of the incarnational narrative in the *Gospel of Peter*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	
2) Incarnational union	*Gos. Pet.* 46, 56
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Gos. Pet.* 46
5) Bodily resurrection	*Gos. Pet.* 55–56
6) Heavenly assumption	

ODES OF SOLOMON

Scholarship on the *Odes of Solomon* is beset with uncertainties.[63] Charlesworth places *Odes* in the late first or early second century,

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[62] Mara, *Évangile de Pierre*, 194.

[63] For an overview of critical issues, see Gerald R. Blaszcek, *A Formcritical Study of Selected Odes of Solomon*, Harvard Semitic Monographs,

by about 125 CE, while others have dated *Odes* as late as the early third century.[64] Syria seems to be a reasonable candidate for the provenance of *Odes*, as Syriac appears to have been the original language in which the text was written.[65] However, Brock cautions that 'date, background and original language all remain uncertain and matters of dispute.'[66]

On its relationship to catholic Christianity, Wright expresses a positive appraisal, noting that the *Odes* 'express a theology and spirituality which, although rooted in the Jewish piety represented by the Psalter and the Qumran texts, show signs (in my judgment) of a more developed theology and range of imagery than we see either in the New Testament or the Apostolic Fathers. … Unlike some later Syrian Christianity, they are firmly rooted in a strong doctrine of creation and incarnation.'[67] However, because of their pervasive use of poetic imagery, the theology of the *Odes* is not

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ed. Frank Moore Cross, vol. 36 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 1–6. The English translation used is James H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon: The Syriac Texts*, corrected reprint ed., Texts and Translations, vol. 13 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978).

[64] On the early date, see James H. Charlesworth, *Critical Reflections on the Odes of Solomon*, vol. 1, *Literary Setting, Textual Studies, Gnosticism, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel of John*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Lester L. Grabbe, vol. 22 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 15; Michael Lattke, 'Dating the *Odes of Solomon*,' *Antichthon* 27 (1993): 45–59. For arguments on a later date, see Hans J. W. Drijvers, ,Kerygma und Logos in den Oden Salomos dargestellt am Beispiel der 23. Ode,' in *Kerygma und Logos: Beiträge zu den geistegeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum, Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Adolf M. Ritter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 171.

[65] Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 218–20.

[66] Sebastian P. Brock, 'The Earliest Syriac Literature,' in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 166.

[67] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 528.

always easy to grasp and its symbols and metaphors could be interpreted in a number of ways.[68] Indeed, the *Odes* have been used by both catholic and non-catholic Christians through the centuries.[69] It must also be kept in mind that the collection of *Odes* may represent a mixture of various traditions and theologies, so different hymns may reflect diverse christological emphases.[70] The text is therefore wrought with enigmas that make it difficult to use as clear primary evidence for the state of the incarnational narrative in Syria in the early second century. Nevertheless, certain individual Odes do seem to highlight the contours of a presupposed incarnational narrative among its community.

A high christology is evident in *Odes* 17.17, where the Messiah is glorified. He is also called 'Word of truth who is self-originate' in 32.2. And 16.18–19 reflects the same kind of Logos theology of John 1:1–3—'And there is nothing outside of the Lord, because he was before anything came to be. And the worlds are by His Word.'[71] Besides these suggestions of pre-incarnate existence, the *Odes* also exhibits incarnational imagery.[72] *Odes* 7.4–6 says, 'He

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[68] Brock, 'The Earliest Syriac Literature,' 166.

[69] The *Odes* appear to have influenced the exegesis and thought of both Lactantius in the third and fourth centuries and Eusebius of Caesarea from approximately the same period. However, Lactantius has been associated with a binitarian 'spirit christology' while Eusebius exhibited a 'Logos-sarx christology,' demonstrating the flexibility with which *Odes* could be read (Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, 2d edn, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* [London: Mowbrays, 1975], 192–93). *Odes* 1, 5, 6, 22, and 25 have also been incorporated into the gnostic *Pistis Sophia* (see Michael Lattke, 'Die Gnostische Interpretation der Oden Salomos in der Pistis Sophia,' in *Die Oden Salomos in ihrer Bedeutung für neues Testament und Gnosis*, ed. Michael Lattke, vol. 1, *Ausführliche Handschriftenbeschreibung*, Orbis biblicus et orientalis, ed. Othmar Keel, Erich Zenger, and Bernard Trémel, vol. 25 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979], 207–25).

[70] Brian McNeil, 'Le Christ en vérité est Un,' *Irénikon* 51 (1978): 201.

[71] See Charlesworth, *Critical Reflections on the Odes of Solomon*, 240.

[72] However, Grant rejects the notion of an incarnation in *Odes*: 'The Odist will not take the final step of admitting that the Word became flesh,

became like me, that I might receive Him. In form He was considered like me, that I might put Him on. And I trembled not when I saw Him, because He was gracious to me. Like my nature He became, that I might understand Him. And like my form, that I might not turn away from Him.' And a vivid description of the incarnation and virgin conception are portrayed with poetic freedom in 19.1–11.[73]

The mention of the sign of the cross and extended hands in 42.1 indicates the means of the Messiah's death. And in 31.9–12 the Messiah describes the suffering he endured with patience and silence: 'Then they divided my spoil, though nothing was owed them. But I endured and held my peace and was silent, that I might not be disturbed by them. But I stood undisturbed like a solid rock, which is continuously pounded by columns of waves and endures. And I bore their bitterness because of humility; that I might redeem my nation and instruct it.'

Some passages also articulate a doctrine of the fleshly resurrection.[74] *Odes* 22.7–10 reads, 'Your right hand destroyed his evil venom, and Your hand leveled the Way for those who believe in You. And It chose them from the graves, and separated them from the dead ones. It took dead bones and covered them with flesh. But they were motionless, so It gave them energy for life.'

One also finds the basic outline of the incarnational narrative in 41.11–15, a hymn that describes the pre-incarnate existence, humiliation, and exaltation of the Logos:

> And His Word is with us in all our way, the Savior who gives life and does not reject ourselves. The Man who humbled Himself, but was exalted because of His own righteousness.

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incarnate (Robert M. Grant, 'The Odes of Solomon and the Church of Antioch,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 [1944]: 366). One must take care, however, not to interpret ambiguity or silence with exclusion and rejection, especially in the genre of poetry.

[73] See Hans J. W. Drijvers, 'The 19th Ode of Solomon: Its Interpretation and Place in Syrian Christianity,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1980): 337–55.

[74] See Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 528–31.

> The Son of the Most High appeared in the perfection of His Father. And light dawned from the Word that was before time in Him. The Messiah in truth is one. And He was known before the foundations of the world, that He might give life to persons for ever by the truth of His name.

To summarize, the *Odes of Solomon* presents a vivid poetic description of what may reflect the popular faith of Syrian Christians in the early second century. Several components of the incarnational narrative ring from the chords of these hymns.[75] The pre-incarnate existence of the exalted Son/Logos is expressed with some degree of clarity (*Odes* 16.18–19; 32.2; 41.11–15) and the incarnational union of the Son/Logos with fleshly humanity may be described in 7.4–6. The true birth and life of the incarnate Son/Logos is associated with the work of the Father and Spirit through the womb of the Virgin in rousing terms in 19.1–11. The Messiah's suffering and death is implied with mention of the cross in 22.7–10 and the true fleshly bodily resurrection of the incarnate Son/Logos is concretized in 22.7–10. Of course, the heavenly assumption of the incarnate Son/Logos is implied both by the praise and worship of the Messiah in the *Odes* themselves, as well as the mention of the exaltation of the Messiah because of his righteousness in 41.12. If the *Odes* originated in the early second century in Syria, they provide evidence of the diverse genres and creative christological expressions in that region. At the very least, we see a collection of hymns that reflect an awareness of the incarnational narrative, presupposing the basic outline of the narrative as the basis for their poetic expressions.

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[75] Also see the summary of the incarnational narrative of the *Odes of Solomon* in James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, Christianity in the Making, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 128.

Figure 13: Elements of the incarnational narrative in the *Odes of Solomon*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Odes* 16.18–19; 32.2; 41.11–15
2) Incarnational union	*Odes* 7.4–6
3) Birth and life	*Odes* 19.1–11
4) Suffering and death	*Odes* 22.7–10
5) Bodily resurrection	*Odes* 22.7–10
6) Heavenly assumption	*Odes* 41.12

CONCLUSION: THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN SYRIA

After this evaluation of possible writings from Syria or Antioch in the same generation as Ignatius, we can conclude that while Ignatius presents the strongest direct and explicit testimony of the incarnational narrative in that region, the *Didache*, *Gospel of Peter*, and *Odes of Solomon* contain nothing that directly contradicts the components of the incarnational narrative. At the same time, they do contain statements—some clear, some ambiguous—that outline the contours of an incarnational background. In any case, all of these texts could have been read and understood by Ignatius's catholic community as being in conformity with an incarnational narrative.

Yet because of the paucity of explicit, direct, and full expressions of the incarnational narrative in the *Didache*, one can also imagine a situation in early second century Syria in which the incarnational narrative was one view among a variety of christological emphases. But none of the texts we have examined exhibit an anti-incarnational polemic against Ignatius's incarnational narrative, which polemic we will see in non-incarnational texts in chapters 16–19.

Figure 14: Discernible references to the six movements of the incarnational narrative in Syria

Writing	1 Pre-incarnate existence	2 Incarnational union	3 Birth and life	4 Suffering and death	5 Bodily resurrection	6 Heavenly assumption
Ign.	+	+	+	+	+	+
Did.			+	+	+	+
Gos. Pet.		+		+	+	
Odes	+	+	+	+	+	+

CHAPTER 11. THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN ASIA MINOR

Because of the reception of Ignatius and his writings by the bishops and churches from Philadelphia, Smyrna, Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, I concluded in chapter 9 that it was likely that catholic Christianity was strongly marked by the incarnational narrative in Asia Minor at least by 110 CE. However, I drew this conclusion based on the statements of Ignatius himself, some of which were self-authenticating, but many of which still await verification. Such verification can come in several forms. First, we can identify additional direct evidence for the strong presence of the incarnational narrative among catholic communities from the early second century itself, indicating the accuracy of Ignatius's assumption that his readers would agree with his doctrine. Second, we can identify evidence that the churches in Asia Minor had received and endorsed Ignatius and his writings, providing less explicit—but no less direct—evidence that Ignatius's concept of catholic Christianity was accepted.

Through both explicit and implicit evidence, I will argue in this chapter that the incarnational narrative that had played a central role in the theology of Ignatius of Antioch was also early and foundational in Asia Minor. The primary texts used to make my case will be Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *The Epistula Apostolorum*, and the brief testimony of Pliny in his letter to the emperor Trajan.

POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

While authorship of Polycarp's *Philippians* is seldom challenged, the question of its date depends partly on the question of its unity. Though I find the evidence for a conflation of earlier and later letters to be unpersuasive, I have nevertheless decided to treat the

work as two letters in order to test the thesis of this study under the most unfavorable evidential conditions.[1] Therefore, it will be assumed for the sake of argument that the first letter of Polycarp written around 110 CE to the Philippians served as a brief transmittal letter for the attached letters of Ignatius. This included a greeting (now likely lost), followed by Pol. *Phil.* 13 and a closing section (perhaps chapter 14), which may also have been removed or absorbed into the current text. The later letter, thought to have been composed by 135 CE or so, would have then contained chapters 1–12 and a farewell similar to chapter 14. If, however, the

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[1] The theory that the Pol. *Phil.* is actually comprised of two letters was first advanced by Percy Neale Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936). Barnard later suggested that Pol. *Phil.* was originally two letters, but that the second (*Phil.* 1–12) was written around 120 CE See Leslie W. Barnard, 'The Problem of St. Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians,' *Church Quarterly Review* 163 (1962): 421–30; Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres; Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th corrected ed., Sources chrétiennes, vol. 10 (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 165–67. Irenaeus's testimony concerning the existence of a single letter of Polycarp to the Philippians has helped convince some of the letter's unity—or at least of a very early combination of the two, which would fit Barnard's theory (Boudewijn Dehandschutter, 'Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians: An Early Example of "Reception",' in *New Testament in Early Christianity*, ed. Jean-Marie Sevrin, Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium, vol. 86 [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989], 277). For an overview of issues on the date and unity of Pol. *Phil.*, see William R. Schoedel, 'Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 276–85. For a fair summary of arguments against the unity of the letter as well as a balanced presentation of arguments in favor of unity, see Paul Hartog, ed., *Polycarp's* Epistle to the Philippians *and the* Martyrdom of Polycarp: *Introduction, Text and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33–40 and See brief summary of the issues in Michael W. Holmes, 'Polycarp of Smyrna, *Epistle to the Philippians*,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster, 121–123 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 121–123.

letter is actually a single writing, the evidence would be pulled back to a single date around 110. But considering that most scholars agree that both parts are the work of Polycarp, the issue of unity is not entirely significant because the Smyrnaean bishop's christology most likely did not undergo radical transformation or evolution in the course of two or three decades.

The evidence from the so-called early letter will be treated first. In chapter 13, we do not have a full and clear indication of Polycarp's own christology. He mentioned Jesus only once as *κύριος*, but beyond this said nothing about him. However, chapter 13 does indirectly reveal Polycarp's received theology and christology by means of his endorsement of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch and his transmittal of that corpus to the church in Philippi.[2] In response to their own request, Polycarp sent the letters, endorsing them thusly: 'From them you will be able to gain great things, because they contain faith and endurance and every edification relating to our Lord' (*Phil.* 13.2). The last phrase, *τὴν εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἀνήκουσαν*, suggests that Polycarp regarded the real power of Ignatius's letters to have been their teaching concerning Christ, as the 'edification (*οἰκοδομήν*)' relates to this teaching. Polycarp further recommended Ignatius's endurance of suffering as an example, also suggesting that the Philippians had seen Ignatius with their own eyes (*ἣν καὶ εἴδατε κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς οὐ μόνον ἐν τοῖς μακαρίοις Ἰγνατίῳ*) (*Phil.* 9.1). Polycarp's reception,

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[2] Pol., *Phil.* 13 (c. 110–117) is regarded as the anchor of external support for Ignatian authorship of the middle recension. At least this part of this book was written within a few weeks or months of Ignatius's travel through Asia Minor. Polycarp wrote, 'The letters of Ignatius sent to us by him, and as many others we have with us, we sent to you.' The epistles sent 'to us' correspond to *Smyrnaeans* and *Polycarp* in the middle recension. Then, all the rest (which sounds as if it were more than two) would have most reasonably contained those letters composed while Ignatius stayed in Smyrna (see conclusions of *Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians*, and *Romans*). Then, from Troas, where Ignatius wrote *Smyrnaeans* and *Polycarp*, he also wrote *Philadelphians*, and the bearer of that letter would likely have traveled through Smyrna, and it is reasonable that Polycarp could very well have received a copy of that final letter then.

collection, endorsement, and transmission of the Ignatian letters therefore indirectly evidence his own christological orientation around 110 CE. In light of such an endorsement and promotion, it is inconceivable that Ignatius and Polycarp did not share a common understanding of the incarnational narrative and its place in Christian thought.[3]

Moving forward to 135 CE, one finds a more complete picture of Polycarp's own position on the incarnational narrative. In his prologue he said that mercy and peace come from both the Father and the Son, regarding the Father as 'God Almighty' while Jesus Christ was 'our Savior' (*Phil.* inscr.). The Father raised Jesus from the dead, giving him glory (see 1 Pet 1:21) and a throne (*Phil.* 2.1, 2; 12.2). However, Polycarp also said that although Jesus was in a role subordinate to the Father, his relationship to creation is one of unparalleled superiority. Believers were to love and serve God and Christ together without distinction (3.3; 5.2). A final passage begins with their united movement toward humanity and ends with humanity's movement toward Father and Son:

> And may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High Priest himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, edify you in faith and truth, and in all meekness, without anger, and in patience, longsuffering, tolerance, and purity, and may he give [*det*, singular] you a lot and portion among his saints, and to us with you, and to all who are under heaven who will

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[3] Even if we were to embrace Allen Brent's thesis of a sort of clash of ecclesiologies between Ignatius and Polycarp that required Polycarp to overlook many disagreements in the writings of Ignatius in his endorsement of the bishop of Antioch, such alleged disagreements were not over christological matters, but over ecclesiastical and ritual markers. See Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic: A Study of an Early Christian Transformation of Pagan Culture*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, ed. Christoph Markschies, vol. 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). In fact, Josef Lössel, who adopts the substance of Brent's thesis, uses the Ignatius-Polycarp relationship as an example of unity on incarnational christology in the midst of diversity of lesser theological and practical matters (Josef Lössel, *The Early Church: History and Memory* [New York: T. & T. Clark, 2010], 86–87).

> believe in our Lord [and God] Jesus Christ and in his Father
> who raised him from the dead. (*Phil.* 12.2)[4]

In sum, Polycarp asserted the deity and pre-incarnate existence of
Christ in various passages that describe him as eternal and exalted
with the Father (*Phil.* inscr., 1.1, 3.3, 5.2, 12.2).[5] The incarnational
union of the Son with fleshly humanity is clearly set forth and
explicitly contrasted with the antichrists who denied that Christ
came in the flesh (2.1).[6] The true birth and life of Christ are not
fully expressed, but his perfect earthly life is described as sinless
(8.1) and an example to follow (8.2), and his earthly existence is
implied by appeals to his words and teachings (7.1–2). The central
narrative elements are repeated several times and in various forms
in Polycarp's short letter: Christ suffered and died for sins, rose
from the dead, and ascended into heaven (*Phil.* 1.2, 2.1, 5.2, 7.1–2,

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[4] The Latin text reads, 'Deus autem et pater domini nostri Iesu
Christi et ipse sempiternus pontifex, dei filius Iesus Christus, aedificet …
et det … in dominum nostrum [et deum] Iesum Christum et in ipsius
patrem qui resuscitavit eum a mortuis.' Though found in four
manuscripts, the reading 'et deum' is disputed and therefore I will not give
it special significance as evidence for a high christology in Polycarp. See
Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche
Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 254.

[5] See Kenneth Berding, *Polycarp and Paul: An Analysis of Their Literary
and Theological Relationship in Light of Polycarp's Use of Biblical and Extra-
Biblical Literature*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, ed. J. den Boeft et
al., vol. 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 167–69.

[6] Also see 7.1, which appears to be an allusion to 1 Jn 4:2–3. It is
unnecessary to require this to be an anti-Marcionite statement, since it is
so close to the anti-docetic statement in 1 Jn 4:2–3, which was certainly
not directed at Marcion. On this passage, Schoedel writes, 'The tenuous
parallel, 1 John 5:6–9, suggests that this is the witness of God through the
cross to his Son. More simply, it may refer to the witness that the cross is
felt to give to the reality of Christ's suffering. The statement is directed
against Docetists who believed that Christ did not really suffer' (William
R. Schoedel, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 5,
Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias, ed. Robert M. Grant
[New York: Nelson, 1967], 23–24).

8.1, 12.2–3). Yet this is not a sterile, detached pronouncement of a creed or the 'gospel,' but a doctrine that had been integrated into the fabric of Polycarp's teaching, directly related to his paraenesis and identity as a Christian and woven through an exhortation to live holy lives and avoid heresy.

Thus, the cumulative direct testimony from Polycarp's writing as well as the indirect testimony by means of his endorsement and transmission of the Ignatian corpus demonstrate that Polycarp had indeed embraced a decisively incarnational narrative by the early second century. This Polycarpian christology is further confirmed by evidence from his close disciples, found in the document known as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

Figure 15: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Polycarp of Smyrna

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Phil.* inscr., 1.1, 3.3, 5.2, 12.2
2) Incarnational union	*Phil.* 2.1; 7.1 (cf. 1 Jn 4:2–3)
3) Birth and life	*Phil.* 8.1, 2; 7.1–2
4) Suffering and death	*Phil.* 1.2; 2.1; 5.2; 7.1; 8.1; 12.3
5) Bodily resurrection	*Phil.* 1.2; 2.1; 12.2
6) Heavenly assumption	*Phil.* 2.1; 5.2; 12.2

MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP

The document from Smyrna to Philomelium, likely written between 155 and 167,[7] gives an alleged firsthand account of the martyrdom of Polycarp in Smyrna.[8] As such, this document

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[7] For a helpful discussion of the date of Polycarp's martyrdom and consequently the date of the account, see Sara Parvis, 'The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 127–132.

[8] I am concerned only with the approximate date, origin, and destination rather than its historical precision, though many scholars

provides additional testimony for the reception of the incarnational narrative in Asia Minor during the first half of the second century and an indirect glimpse at the theology of Polycarp by means of a written record from his close disciples.

In *Martyrdom of Polycarp* the Son is said to be worshiped by Christians (17.2–3). And in 14.3 he is said to be glorified together with the Father and Spirit: 'Because of this, and concerning all things, I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you, through the eternal and heavenly high priest Jesus Christ, your beloved servant (παιδός), through whom to you with him and the Holy Spirit be glory both now and unto the coming ages. Amen.'

By analogy with Polycarp's own martyrdom, we learn what that community in Smyrna believed about the death of Jesus, described in what they called the 'gospel': 'For almost all preceding things came to be in order that the Lord might again display to us the martyrdom which is in accordance with the gospel. For he waited to be handed over, as also the Lord [did], in order that we might also be imitators of him' (1.1–2). Throughout the account, we see lines drawn between the martyrdom of Polycarp and the death of Christ, so that the former informs us of the Smyrnaeans' view of the latter.[9]

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regard its account to be generally unembellished. But even if the entire account were fictitious the christology of the writers would be seen through the words of Polycarp and the comments of the authors, thus establishing the christology in Smyrna in the middle of the second century. See especially the comments in Parvis, 'The *Marytrdom of Polycarp*,' 145–146: 'Arguments for inauthenticity stumble over this one fact above all: there is nothing in the text that cannot belong to the mid-second century.' For an overview and summary—including a bibliography—on the date of *Mart. Pol.*, see Boudewijn Dehandschutter, 'The Martyrium Polycarpi: A Century of Research,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 497–503, 21–22.

[9] See *Mart. Pol.* 1.1–2; 19.1. Cf. Pol. *Phil.* 8.2. See Schoedel, *Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 51–54.

The authors placed on the lips of the persecutors a concern over Christians beginning to worship Polycarp rather than 'the one who was crucified' (17.2).[10] This suggests that the teaching of Christ crucified (and the worship of him) was so central to Christian identity at Smyrna that even their opponents would have been aware of this teaching.[11] The Smyrnaeans also believed that Christ was 'the one who suffered for the salvation of the whole world of those being saved' (*Mart. Pol.* 17.2), and we see that the resurrection of Christ would have been regarded as both physical and spiritual. Polycarp prayed that he would receive 'a place among the number of the martyrs in the cup of [your] Christ, unto the resurrection of life eternal, both of soul and body, in the immorality of the Holy Spirit' (*Mart. Pol.* 14.2). Judith Lieu notes:

> Perhaps what is most striking about this brief scene is the way that the terms 'Christian' (χριστιανός) and 'Christianity' (χριστιανισμός) are used without comment or explanation. At what point in the century or more since the death of Jesus and the earliest preaching of his followers did this become possible? How would not only outsiders but also those who claimed the epithet 'Christian' have understood the label, and how did this sense of being a Christian emerge?[12]

This question leads me to a brief discussion of the concept of 'catholic Christianity' in the *Martyrdom*. In 19.2, the text describes Christ as 'the Savior of our souls, the navigator of our bodies, and

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[10] Campenhausen, however, regards 17.2–3 as one of several interpolations in *Mart. Pol.* See Hans von Campenhausen, 'Bearbeitungen und Interpolationen des Polycarpmartyriums,' in *Aus der Frühzeit des Christentums: Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des ersten und zweiten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hans von Campenhausen (Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 253–301.

[11] Whether Nicetes, the father of Herod, the police captain, actually said this is beside the point. It is clear that the authors themselves would have thought their doctrine of the crucified and risen Christ and their worship of him as so obvious that the unbelievers would have said such a thing.

[12] Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

shepherd of the catholic church throughout the inhabited world (τῆς κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην).'[13] Thus, the writers at least believed that their form of Christianity was common throughout the world at that time. This is confirmed by several additional statements in the document. The letter opens with a greeting from 'the church of God living as a stranger at Smyrna to the church of God living as a stranger in Philomelium and to all the sojourners of the holy and catholic church (τῆς ἁγίας καὶ καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας) according to each place' (*Mart. Pol.* inscr.). The intended audience, therefore, was to include all catholic Christians everywhere (see 19.2). We are told that while he waited for his arrest, he spent time praying 'for the churches throughout the inhabited world, which was customary for him' (5.1), revealing a sense of identification with congregations in various regions.[14] The crowd of onlookers in the stadium of Smyrna shouted, 'This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians' (12.2), indicating that the non-Christians perceived Polycarp to have broad authority in Asia. At least from the perspective of the authors, the identity of the catholic Christians in Asia was so distinct that Polycarp could be described as 'the father of the Christians.'[15]

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[13] This concept of Christ as the 'shepherd of the catholic church' may have a similar intention as the famous Ignatian analogy between the presence of the bishop as constituting the identity of the local church and the presence of Christ as the identity of the catholic church (Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.2). See discussion in chapter 8, pp. 155–158.

[14] Also see his prayer in 8.1, where he prayed for τὴν οἰκουμένην καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας.

[15] Also see *Mart. Pol.* 19.1: 'Who, with those from Philadelphia, was the twelfth martyred in Smyrna, he alone is more remembered by everyone, so that even by the Gentiles in every place he is spoken of.' We cannot speculate on what is meant by 'everyone' and 'in every place,' but the influence of Polycarp appears to have been significant in the minds of the Smyrnaeans, a supposition that is partially confirmed by the existence of this letter to Philomelium itself. Not only was this account requested by the Christians in Philomelium (20.1), but the account itself continued to be copied and passed around to a broad readership, as is testified to in the transcribers' notes at the end of the document (21.1–22.3).

To review, in *Martrdom of Polycarp* a general picture of the Smyrnaeans' concept of the incarnational narrative develops, though the primary purpose of the text is to relay the account of Polycarp's death. The pre-incarnate existence of the exalted Son is suggested by his appellation as eternal and his worship as deity (14.3; 17.2–3). The incarnational union with fleshly humanity is not explicitly developed, but such an understanding is implied by the fact of suffering, death, and bodily resurrection, and the true suffering and death of Christ runs through the entire narrative as Polycarp's own trial and execution is regarded as in conformity with the Lord's (1.2; 17.2; 19.1). Likewise, the true fleshly resurrection is affirmed by means of Polycarp's own anticipation of resurrection (14.2). Finally, the ascension is demanded by the fact that Christ is worshiped and served as king (9.3; 17.2–3). At every point the testimony of *Martyrdom of Polycarp* confirms the continued centrality of the incarnational narrative in Asia Minor at the end of Polycarp's life, near the middle of the second century. Coming from the immediate disciples of Polycarp, this testimony sheds light on the teachings of Polycarp himself.

Figure 16: Elements of the incarnational narrative in the
Martyrdom of Polycarp

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Mart. Pol.* 14.3; 17.2–3
2) Incarnational union	*Mart. Pol.* 1.2;
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Mart. Pol.* 17.2; 19.1
5) Bodily resurrection	*Mart. Pol.* 14.2
6) Heavenly assumption	*Mart. Pol.* 9.3; 17.2–3

THE *EPISTULA APOSTOLORUM*

Many scholars place the composition of the *Epistula Apostolorum* in Egypt sometime after the middle of the second century.[16] Others, asserting an Egyptian or Syrian provenance, have argued for a date prior to the middle of the second century.[17] Recently some have challenged the consensus of an Egyptian origin, concluding that the text originated in Asia or Syria in the first half of the second century.[18] The text survives in Coptic and Ethiopic versions as well as a few fragments in Latin.[19]

The text opens with an explicit statement against Simon and Cerinthus, the 'false apostles,' and purports to present an account of the 'gospel,' so that the readers will not depart from it (*Ep. Apost.* 1, 7). It also claims to be from the apostles addressing the churches throughout the world, evidencing a belief in the geographical catholicity of Christianity (*Ep. Apost.* 2). The content of the 'gospel' is 'that which concerns our Lord Jesus Christ' (*Ep. Apost.* 2; cf. Rom 1:4).

The pre-incarnate existence of Christ is clearly affirmed in the document. He is 'God the Son of God' (*Ep. Apost.* 3). The Son of God was sent by God and became incarnate by the virgin birth.

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[16] J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 556.

[17] Hugo Deunsing, 'Epistula Apostolorum,' in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, Edgar Hennecke, and R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1, *Gospels and Related Writings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 191.

[18] Richard A. Norris Jr., 'Apocryphal Writings and Acts of the Martyrs,' in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 31. For a comprehensive discussion of date and provenance as well as arguments for an early second century date and Asian origin, see Charles E. Hill, 'The *Epistula Apostolorum*: An Asian Tract from the Time of Polycarp,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no. 1 (1999): 1–53.

[19] Norris, 'Apocryphal Writings and Acts of the Martyrs,' 30. The translation used here is that of M. R. James, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924).

Thus, in *Epistula Apostolorum* 3 we read, 'He is the word become flesh: that of Mary the holy virgin he took a body, begotten of the Holy Ghost, not of the will (lust) of the flesh, but by the will of God.' Later he describes himself in language similar to Ignatius, *Ephesians* 7.2, 'I who am unbegotten and yet begotten of mankind, who am without flesh and yet have borne flesh' (*Ep. Apost.* 21). Hill notes, 'The true sarkic nature of Christ's humanity is one of the foremost concerns of the tract.'[20]

Besides this, Christ is said to have been crucified by Pontius Pilate, truly suffering and dying in the flesh (*Ep. Apost.* 9, 18). After this he rose from the dead in the flesh, so that his disciples could even touch him.[21] In *Epistula Apostolorum* 2, the apostles are able to touch and feel Jesus after resurrection, a point that is emphasized when Christ invites the disciples to verify the real physicality of his resurrection: 'And that you may know that it is I, lay your hand, Peter, and your finger in the nail-print of my hands; and you, Thomas, in my side; and also you, Andrew, see whether my foot steps on the ground and leaves a footprint' (*Ep. Ap.* 11). Later Christ explains that the same kind of resurrection that he experienced would also be experienced by the disciples and those who believed through them: 'The resurrection of the flesh shall come to pass with the soul therein and the spirit' (24). Wright calls this a 'robust view of Jesus' bodily resurrection.'[22] And Norris notes, 'Its aim is clearly anti-docetic and anti-gnostic. Thus it insists not only on the reality of Christ's body, but on the bodily resurrection of believers.'[23]

To sum up, in *Epistula Apostolorum* we see clear articulations of the incarnational narrative often set in polemical language against false teachers. Despite its obvious apocryphal additions and its polemical context, the content of *Epistula Apostolorum* was clearly written to support the incarnational narrative in the face of

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[20] Hill, 'The *Epistula Apostolorum*,' 6–7.

[21] *Ep. Apost.* 2, 3, 9–10, 12, 19, 21, 25, 26.

[22] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 499.

[23] Norris, 'Apocryphal Writings and Acts of the Martyrs,' 31.

dissenters, especially those who rejected the resurrection of the flesh.[24]

Figure 17: Elements of the incarnational narrative in the
Epistula Apostolorum

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Ep. Apost.* 3
2) Incarnational union	*Ep. Apost.* 3, 21
3) Birth and life	*Ep. Apost.* 3
4) Suffering and death	*Ep. Apost.* 9, 18
5) Bodily resurrection	*Ep. Apost.* 2, 11, 24
6) Heavenly assumption	*Ep. Apost.* 3

THE TESTIMONY OF PLINY

I conclude the testimony from Asia Minor with a piece of indirect—but important—corroborative evidence, especially as it relates to Christian identity from the perspective of outsiders. Around 111 CE, Pliny the Younger wrote his now famous letter to the emperor Trajan (*Lib.* 10.96, *Plinius Traiano Imperatori*).[25] In this letter Pliny consulted the emperor regarding the punishment of Christians, the beliefs and practices of whom Pliny had investigated. Pliny stated that his fullest testimony about

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[24] Besides presenting a clear incarnational narrative, the text also contains cosmological speculations (*Ep. Apost.* 13) as well as apocryphal accounts of Christ as a child (*Ep. Apost.* 4) and the claim that the pre-incarnate Christ took the form of an angel (Gabriel) in announcing his own arrival (*Ep. Apost.* 14). Yet these minor speculations hardly distract from the emphasis on the incarnational narrative of the text, and, in fact, affirm the Son's pre-incarnate existence.

[25] The Latin text and English translation is that of Betty Radice, *Pliny: Letters and Panegyricus*, vol. 2, *Letters VIII–X and Panegyricus*, Loeb Classical Library, ed. G. P. Goold, vol. 59 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

Christianity had come to him by means of those who had once been Christians but had denounced Christianity as an error (10.96.6). These reported the activities of the Christians thusly:

> They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god (*carmenque Christo quasi deo*), and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind. (Pliny, *Lib*. 10.96.7)

Pliny relayed a synthesis of the various accounts he received from those who had renounced the Christian faith.[26] He supplemented the testimony from the defectors with the interrogation of two tortured deaconesses who still professed Christianity and found no reason to alter his picture of Christian identity. His conclusions are remarkable in that they reveal little that is ignoble, and he appears to have been puzzled by the charges against the Christians except for their obstinacy against the order of Rome: 'I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant length' (*Lib*. 10.96.8).

Regarding the statement 'christo quasi deo,' Mühlenberg notes:

> Pliny knows that the Christians accord to Christ the status of a God, because the cursing of Christ, required by the test, has a religious meaning. According to my interpretation, Pliny is well aware of the fact that the Christians worship Christ as the only God, excluding all other gods, i.e., rejecting the gods of the

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[26] In the immediate context, the third person plural subject of *affirmabant* refers to those who had once worshiped as Christians, but later renounced their faith quite decisively: 'Hi quoque omnes et imaginem tuam deorumque simulacra venerati sunt et Christo male dixerunt' (*Lib*. 10.96.6).

> Roman religion. I conclude as follows: The skandalon, the
> fanatic obstinacy, as Pliny sees it, consists in the exclusivity of
> the divinity of Jesus.[27]

It is true that we cannot determine based on Pliny's statements
whether the Christians he interrogated or the defectors he
questioned believed in an incarnational christology or a docetic
christology—both of which would confess Jesus as 'god.' And it is,
after all, the nearby region of Pontus from which Marcion would
soon emerge, having developed an influential docetic christology
by the next generation.[28] We also know from the letters of Ignatius
and other sources that non-incarnational docetic christologies were
current at the time at least in or around Antioch and perhaps Asia
Minor (see chapter 16, pp. 313–317). However, Pliny's report as we
have it fits the identity of a Christian community in conformity
with an incarnational narrative, both in the exclusive worship of
Christ as 'god' vis-à-vis the Roman gods, and in the celebration of
the eucharist or love feast, the 'food of an ordinary, harmless kind.'
Pliny's testimony is helpful not in addressing the issue of the

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[27] E. Mühlenberg, 'The Divinity of Jesus in Early Christian Faith,'
Studia patristica 17, no. 1 (1982): 139. After surveying Christian and non-
Christian reports about the doctrine of Christ's divinity, Mühlenberg
suggests that the teaching of the divinity of Jesus is a matter of Christian
self-understanding, appealing not only to the explicit references to Jesus
as 'Son of God' or 'God,' but also to the reports to martyrdom as the
alternative to blasphemy and the exclusivity of the Christian claims
concerning Christ over against pagan deities (ibid., 144–46).

[28] Wilken reminds us that the term 'god' in Pliny's worldview could
refer to any of a number of exalted beings, not necessary the one high
God (Robert L. Wilken, 'The Christians as the Romans (and Greeks) Saw
Them,' in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E. P. Sanders, vol. 1, *The
Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* [London: SCM Press,
1980], 113–15). However, Wilken's tendency to downplay the status of
Christ in Pliny's testimony should be checked by the fact that Pliny was
relaying, in the fashion of indirect discourse, the testimonies of former
Christians. The thoughts, if not the words themselves, belonged not to
Pliny, but to the lapsed Christians (*Lib.* 10.96.6).

establishment of an incarnational narrative, but in demonstrating a single catholic identity from the perspective of outside observers.

CONCLUSION: THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN ASIA MINOR

I have shown that an examination of the personal, textual, and theological relationships between the extant writings from Asia Minor suggests that the incarnational narrative was both present and potent in that region in the first half of the second century. This corroborates the claim initially suggested by our examination of Ignatius of Antioch that the incarnational narrative was early, foundational, and geographically widespread in the second century. The indirect testimony of Ignatius is confirmed by the direct testimony of Polycarp himself, which in turn is consistent with the indirect testimonies of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and *Epistula Apostolorum*, as well as the letter of Pliny.

Figure 18: Discernible references to the six movements of the incarnational narrative in Asia Minor

Writing	1 Pre-incarnate existence	2 Incarnational union	3 Birth and life	4 Suffering and death	5 Bodily resurrection	6 Heavenly assumption
Pol. *Phil.*	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mart. Pol.	+	+		+	+	+
Ep. Apost.	+	+	+	+	+	+
*Pliny.						+

*Indirect Testimony (see comments)

CHAPTER 12. THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN ACHAIA AND MACEDONIA

In this chapter I will demonstrate that the incarnational narrative that played a central role in the catholic identity of Ignatius of Antioch and the Christians of Syria and Asia Minor was also early and foundational in Achaia and Macedonia. To this end, I will examine the testimony from *1 Clement* in some detail as it serves as both indirect testimony for Achaia and direct testimony for Rome in the late first century. I will then survey the direct early testimony of Aristides of Athens. I will follow this with a review of the indirect testimony of Ignatius and Polycarp as they relate to the church in Philippi of Macedonia.

FIRST CLEMENT

Although *1 Clement* is better regarded as indirect testimony for the state of catholic Christianity in Achaia in the early second century, I have decided to maintain a geographical progression and fully develop its contents here as it relates both primarily to Rome (treated in chapter 13) and secondarily to Corinth. As such, my later use of *1 Clement* as primary evidence for catholic Christianity in Rome will refer back to the full development in this section.[1]

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[1] Throughout this section, I will refer to the author of the letter as 'Clement.' I am aware that the letter is written from 'the church of God which lives as a stranger in Rome,' and that no individual author is identified. However, Lindemann rightly notes, '1Clem ist sicher von einem einzelnen Autor verfaßt (und dann möglicherweise durch die Gemeinde autorisiert) worden, wie der einheitliche Sprachstil und die

The general consensus for dating *1 Clement* leans toward a date of about 96 CE.[2] However, this has not gone without challenge, as some have argued for a later date, while others for an earlier date.[3] Aligning with the general consensus on the issue of date, I regard a late first century date as most probable, and this study will proceed on this assumption.

I begin with a general overview of the incarnational narrative of *1 Clement* as well as a brief characterization of its sense of catholic consciousness. Following this, I will demonstrate that the

einheitliche Argumentationsweise zeigen' (Andreas Lindemann, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, vol. 1, *Die Clemensbriefe*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. Hans Litzmann, Günter Bornkamm, and Andreas Lindemann, vol. 17 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992], 12). I have decided to call this individual author 'Clement'—whether he was a presbyter, bishop, or secretary of the church of Rome is not entirely relevant. The letter bears all the marks of a community-approved official correspondence, including the sponsorship of three official messengers (οἱ ἀπεσταλμένοι)—Claudius Ephebus, Valerius Bito, and Fortunatus (*1 Clem.* 65.1).

    [2] Leslie W. Barnard, *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1967), 9, 12; W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 97; Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 77; Adolf von Harnack, *Einführung in die alte Kirchengeschichte: Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche an die Korinthische aus der Zeit Domitians (1. Clemensbrief)* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1929), 52; J. B. Lightfoot, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 1*, 2d edn, vol. 1, *S. Clement of Rome* (New York: Olms, 1973), 346–58; Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 12. Erlemann argues for an even earlier date, between 70 and 80 (Kurt Erlemann, 'Die Datierung des ersten Klemensbriefes—Anfragen an eine communis opinio,' *New Testament Studies* 44 [1998]: 591–607).

    [3] See C. Eggenberger, *Die Quellen der politischen Ethik des 1. Kelmensbriefes* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1951), 182–87; Thomas J. Herron, 'The Most Probable Date of the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,' *Studia patristica* 21 (1989): 106–21; Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 18–19; L. L. Welborn, 'On the Date of First Clement,' *Biblical Research* 29 (1984): 37.

incarnational narrative played a pivotal role in the argument of this inter-ecclesial epistle, while a concern for 'harmony and peace' lay at the center of the motivation behind the letter (*1 Clem.* 63.2). In the context of a developed argument for the restoration of unity and peace, the author treated neither christology nor the incarnational narrative as debated or controversial topics.[4] Rather, he took for granted that his readers were in agreement with his christological statements. The relationship between Rome and Corinth at the end of the first century, therefore, suggests an existing unity concerning elements of the incarnational narrative.

Lietzmann says that the content of *1 Clement* suggests that the Roman community was 'in full consciousness of the unity of the Church as a whole.'[5] More recently Bowe writes, 'The letter appeals throughout to a common tradition it shares with Christians in Corinth, thereby sounding a repeated reminder of what they hold in common.'[6] Bowe notes several rhetorical means the church of Rome used to highlight the solidarity, family relationship, and mutuality with the Corinthian Christians.[7] She concludes:

> These devices demonstrate the author's intended purpose: to exhort, to admonish, to call the Corinthian community to a reconsideration of what constitutes Christian living. In so doing, Clement appeals to values and to traditions that are

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[4] On the rhetorical character of *1 Clement* as a plea for peace and concord, similar to other ancient documents written for the same purpose, see W. C. van Unnik, *Studies over de zogenaamde eerste brief van Clemens* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandse, 1970).

[5] Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of the Christian Church* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1961), 192.

[6] Barbara E. Bowe, *A Church in Crisis: Ecclesiology and Paraenesis in Clement of Rome*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, vol. 23 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 39.

[7] These include, *inter alia*, the use of the vocative forms of such terms of endearment as ἀγαπητοί; an appeal to common tradition, especially in the form of their common relationship to Old Testament revelation; commonly repeated doxologies; and common adversaries (ibid., 38–41).

meant to be shared and affirmed by Christians everywhere, and
he reaffirms in a particular way the unity that binds the
churches in Rome and Corinth, a unity he hopes will confirm
and undergird the entreaty.[8]

This inter-ecclesial corporate consciousness is similar to what I
have generally called 'catholic Christianity,' and although Clement
did not employ the term καθολικός, his sense of the geographical
span of the church beyond the local seems to conform to the
general sense in which it was used by Ignatius roughly twenty years
later. In any case, throughout *1 Clemenet* there is no indication that
the author felt obligated to establish an inter-ecclesial relationship
where none previously existed. Rather, the relationship is assumed
as the context within which he could set forth his exhortations
regarding the immediate occasion of the writing.

Because of the very nature of the correspondence, and the
statements concerning the glorious past of the church in Corinth (*1
Clem.* 1–2), one may assume that the Roman leadership regarded
the church in Corinth to have been an ally of the same Christian
faith. But what was the nature of this faith, of which the
Corinthians were 'excellent and steadfast' (1.2)? What was the
content of their knowledge, which was 'complete and sound' (1.2)?
What constituted the essential identity that was at risk because of
the schism? How did this identity relate to christological content?

First Clement has often been regarded as exhibiting an
undeveloped or primitive christological awareness supposedly
similar to that found in the *Shepherd of Hermas* or *Didache*.[9] In fact,

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[8] Ibid., 41.

[9] Harold Bertram Bumpus, *The Christological Awareness of Clement of
Rome and Its Sources* (Winchester: University Press of Cambridge, 1972),
173. See E. Barnikol, 'Die präexistenziöse Christologie des 1.
Clemensbriefes,' *Theologische Jahbücher* 4 (1936): 61–76; Robert M. Grant,
ed., *After the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 13. See Geza
Vermes, *Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea* (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 2014), 161–162, who sees Clement's portrayal of Jesus as
'a step forward compared to the Didache,' but not as advanced as
Barnabas.

Bumpus used *1 Clement* to 'gain a broader view of the plurality of Christological awareness in this early and formative period.'[10] I will argue, however, that the christology of *1 Clement* is best seen in relation to the incarnational narrative already found in Ignatius and Polycarp, both of whom likely knew and accepted *1 Clement* as part of a received catholic Christian tradition.[11]

Being aware of the explicit purpose of the letter as an exhortation to restore peace and unity (*1 Clem.* 63.2),[12] Henne's statements regarding the christology of *1 Clement* must be taken seriously: 'La *Lettre aux Corinthiens* n'est donc pas un traité de christologie. C'est bien au contraire un écrit de circonstance visant

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[10] Bumpus, *The Christological Awareness of Clement of Rome and Its Sources*, 173. He writes, 'Contrary to Harnack, who sees a remarkable Christology in Clement, despite his insistence on Old Testament references, and equally contrary to Völter who sees here a Christianity without Christ, it must be stated that Jesus has an exalted role as the preexistent One who came in humility but is viewed largely in terms of intertestamental categories and who teaches us and reveals God's plan while at the same time exercising a salvific function (even if cautiously stated) and who presides over the elect who now pray to God through him' (ibid., 183).

[11] For Polycarp, see Johannes B. Bauer, *Die Polykarpbriefe, übersetzt und erklärt*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, vol. 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 28–30; Horacio E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 90–92. With regard to Ignatius's knowledge of *1 Clem.*, see O. Perler, 'Ignatius von Antiochien und die römische Christengemeinde,' *Divus Thomas* 22 (1944): 413–51; Christine Trevett, 'Ignatius "To the Romans" and 1 Clement 54–56,' *Vigiliae christianae* 43 (1989): 35–52.

[12] Odd Magne Bakke, *"Concord and Peace": A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe, ed. Jörg Frey, Martin Hengel, and Otfried Hofius, vol. 141 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 11–13; Andrew F. Gregory, '*1 Clement*: An Introduction,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 24–27; Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament*, 16; Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 17.

à rétablir l'ordre dans une communauté revoltée,' though Henne still discerns valuable christological expressions throughout the letter that can be used to construct a vivid picture of the Roman church's christological confession.[13] Thus, even in light of the basically non-christological purpose of the letter, it still exhibits a rich christology. Mees summarized the picture of Christ in *1 Clement* in terms of the following focalpoints: '(1) Christus der einzigartig Erwählte Gottes; (2) Christus der Mann des Leidens für uns nach dem Willen Gottes; (3) Christus der Hohepriester auf ewig; (4) Christus der Herr und Richter, der wiederkommen wird.'[14]

While Clement set forth a number of tenets constitutive of an incarnational narrative, he also gave a glimpse of the nature of catholic Christianity at the close of the first century. He mentioned the 'vile and wicked revolt (στάσεως)' that had recently risen among the Corinthians at the instigation of 'a few reckless and self-willed individuals (ὀλίγα πρόσωπα προπετῆ καὶ αὐθάδη)' (*1 Clem.* 1.1).[15] Clement then went on to reflect on the past from which they had deviated. Their once excellent reputation was being greatly blasphemed because of their schism (1.1). In the past, their good name had been earned because they had heeded Christ's words, and his sufferings were before their eyes (2.1).[16] The Corinthians

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[13] Philippe Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, Paradosis, ed. Dirk van Damme and Otto Wermelinger, vol. 33 (Freiburg: Editions Universitaires, 1992), 11.

[14] Michael Mees, 'Das Christusbild des ersten Klemensbriefes,' *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 66 (1990): 298.

[15] I take this statement as self-authenticating (see above, p. 60). If, in fact, the schism he mentioned had been widespread and constituted the majority, Clement would have lost credibility with his readers. We must suppose that at least based on the information available to him at the time, Clement believed the schism to be relatively minor, but dangerous nonetheless.

[16] If θεοῦ was the original reading rather than Χριστοῦ, the reference to the pronoun in 'his sufferings' would refer to θεός as its nearest personal antecedent, anticipating similar language in Ignatius (Ign. *Rom.* insc.). This would suggest an incarnational christology as well as the

had focused on the teachings of Christ and his passion. In response to this emphasis on the teachings and sufferings of Christ, they had enjoyed peace and manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit (2.3).

In this ideal condition, 'every revolt and every schism was abominable' to the Corinthians (*1 Clem.* 2.6). We can assume that this involved not merely the lifestyle of submission and good works, but also their emphasis on the teachings and passion of Christ. Their faith and practice were exemplary and unified.[17] However, in chapter 3 we learn of the tragedy which prompted the letter. Those who did not hold an office in the church were rebelling against those who were in positions of authority (3.1–3). The result was a loss of fearing God and following Christ, leading to lust and jealousy (3.4). There is no indication that the christology of the Corinthians had suffered, that any had denied the passion, or actually denied the words and works of Christ. Had this been the

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aspects of the incarnational narrative in which the incarnate Son of God suffered. As much as such a reading would advance my thesis, I am compelled by the textual evidence to regard Χριστοῦ as the most likely original reading. The fifth century Alexandrinus reads θεοῦ, while Hierosolymitanus (1056 CE), the Latin version of an eleventh century manuscript, the Syriac translation dating 1169–70 CE, and the Coptic translations from the fourth and seventh centuries read 'of Christ.' The testimony of the versions, though late, is nevertheless impressive. If θεοῦ is original, we must suppose that Χριστοῦ entered the manuscript tradition quite early, perhaps in the second or third centuries, and somewhere near its source since the change appears in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic (Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*).

[17] It has been argued that Clement employed a literary device of *capatio beneveloniae*, exaggerating the actual history of Corinth to suit his paraenetic purpose (see Karlmann Beyschlag, *Clemens Romanus und der Frühkatholizismus: Untersuchungen zu 1 Clem. 1—7*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, vol. 35 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966], 331). However, Clement's introduction serves as more than simply a greeting; it is the basis for his initial argument, which would be utterly self-defeating if it were not accurate. See Davorin Peterlin, 'The Corinthian Church between Paul's and Clement's Time,' *Asbury Theological Journal* 53 (1998): 50.

case, we might expect Clement to have addressed these issues as they related to the schism.

Clement then began to expound on the seriousness of the sin of rebellion and the severity of judgment that resulted. Since this was a matter of behavior (*1 Clemn.* 3.4), he sought to elicit right behavior rather than to establish the proper teachings concerning the person and work of Christ. Again, the very fact that he did not engage in a christological polemic may suggest that their christology was not an issue. The primary character flaws that had affected the schism were jealousy and envy (4.7–13).

In lashing out against the practice and results of their jealousy and envy, Clement appealed to a number of authorities, which he certainly expected his readers in Corinth to have accepted. He moved from ancient examples described in *1 Clement* 4 to more examples of more recent generations (5.1): great pillars of the faith who themselves had been victims of jealousy and envy (5.2). For his rhetoric to have an effect, Clement needed to appeal to authorities that both the Roman and Corinthian churches held in common.

To what authorities did Clement appeal? He first mentioned 'Peter,' who endured many trials and went to his place in glory (*1 Clem.* 5.4). This occurred in their recent memory, perhaps around the year 67 CE—about thirty years prior to Clement's writing. He next mentioned Paul, recounting details of his ministry, testimony, and execution (5.5–7), then referred to a great number of elect whose suffering as a result of jealousy set examples for us (6.1). The point of Clement's argument was that jealousy and envy (the problems in Corinth) always caused severe suffering and damage to the church, the family, and the world (6.1–4).

He therefore exhorted his readers to 'leave behind the empty and vain concerns,' and 'come to the renowned and revered canon of tradition' (*1 Clemn.* 7.2). The problem in Corinth was not necessarily that they had abandoned or denied this tradition, but that they were not living in accordance with it. Their schism caused by jealousy and envy had resulted in a practical abandonment of the 'canon of tradition' (τῆς παραδόσεως … κανόνα) (7.2). What was the content of this 'rule' or 'canon,' which was to form the standard of their belief and practice? He wrote, 'Let us perceive what is good and what is pleasant and what is acceptable before our maker. Let us look steadfastly upon the blood of Christ and let

us recognize how precious it is to our Father, because, having been poured out on account of our salvation, it effected the grace of repentance for the whole world' (7.3–4). Thus, the 'canon of tradition' includes the saving work of Christ—the blood offered as a sacrifice for salvation. In Clement's mind, the center of the tradition was the salvific suffering of Christ.[18]

As part of his argument, Clement determined to review from generation to generation that God granted repentance to those who turned to him. Even the most stubborn and troublesome schismatics could repent and return to unity (*1 Clem.* 7.5). He pleaded for a return to God after the example of a host of Old Testament models (7.6–12.8). The point of these illustrations, however, was not to correct christological or doctrinal deviation but to heal schism (13.1). Clement presented only two alternatives: to be obedient to God or to follow those who illegitimately set themselves up as leaders and only serve to sever believers from what is right (14.1–2). Thus, the result of the schism was that people would be misled from the truth. Clement called his brothers to be kind to them, however (14.3–4). The schismatics, according to Clement, were deceitfully hypocritical, flattering with the tongue, but secretly speaking evil (15.1–7).

Clement appealed to the presence of Christ with the humble in 16.1 as further support for his exhortation in 15.1 to unite with those who practice peace. Believers were to exercise humility rather than pride—submission to authority rather than sedition against authority. In this, Christ served as the perfect example through his humility in the incarnation: 'The scepter of the majesty of God, our

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[18] It is possible that the exhortation to 'look upon the blood of Christ' in 7.4 is a reference to the eucharist, thus linking the confession of the incarnational narrative to the community participation in eucharistic worship (see E. W. Fisher, 'Let Us Look upon the Blood of Christ (1 Clement 7,4),' *Vigiliae christianae* 34 [1980]: 218–36). Fisher, however, fails to recognize that purpose of the exhortation to 'look steadfastly upon the blood of Christ' was not to emphasize the eucharist itself, but to enforce the first exhortation: 'come to the renowned and revered canon of tradition' (7.2). Thus, the confessional aspect of eucharistic worship appears to be primary, whatever epiphanic realism may also be implied.

Lord Jesus Christ, did not come in boast of arrogance or pride, though having the ability (καίπερ δυνάμενος), but [he came] displaying humility (ταπεινοφρονίας), just as the Holy Spirit spoke concerning him' (16.2).[19] Clement then quoted Isaiah 53:1–12 and Psalm 22:6–8, illustrating the true humanity and humiliation of the 'sceptre of the majesty of God' (16.2). In that statement he said that Christ could have come with pomp, arrogance, and pride, a statement that presupposes an exalted position of Christ prior to his coming as a suffering servant.[20] Such a notion points to an incarnational rather than agency or other non-incarnational christology. Harnack writes: 'Er ist das Szepter Gottes und hätte in göttlicher Herrlichkeit auf die Erde kommen können (16,2); also steht seine Präexistenz fest.'[21]

In light of the use of the term σκῆπτρον in Messianic texts in which the Christ holds the scepter as a symbol of authority, Henne points out an important observation regarding the description in 16.2:

> Cl 16,2 ne décrit pas le Christ brandissant un sceptre. Il est identifé à celui-ci. Ce pouvoir divin, toute la puissance divine symbolisée par ce baton est assimilée au Christ. Ce simple titre rehausse de toute-puissance divine la figure du Christ au début de ce chapitre 16.

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[19] Henne calls *1 Clem.* 16 'le premier grand texte christologique de la *Lettre* de Clément' (Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 27).

[20] Some have doubted that a preexistence christology is found in *1 Clem.* 16.2, but Clement drew implications from the example of Christ's humility that demand it (16.7). See Barnikol, 'Die präexistenziöse Christologie des 1. Clemensbriefes,' 61–76; Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 229–32.

[21] Adolf von Harnack, 'Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche an die Korinthische aus der Zeit Domitians (I. Clemensbrief),' in *Encounters with Hellenism: Studies in the First Letter of Clement*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and Laurence L. Welborn, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, ed. Martin Hengel et al., vol. 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 59.

> Et cela correspond bien à l'intention de Clément: celui-ci veut nous presenter le Christ comme modèle d'humilité. En peu de mots, il évoque de façon suggestive toute la grandeur du Christ. Plus les deux pôles opposés de l'abaissement sont décrits avec emphase, plus l'œuvre vertueuse apparaît avec éclat.[22]

Henne's final statement highlights an important point in my own argument. Because the author's primary purpose was to address an issue of presumptuous insubordination in Corinth and to restore peace and harmony, his interests were paraenetic, not specifically doctrinal or polemical. Bumpus notes:

> The second phrase, the Scepter of the Majesty of God or the Greatness of God, the Lord Jesus Christ … is again a reminder of the supreme dignity of Christ and of his unique excellence. … The emphasis of this passage is again on Christ as a model because he was humble, etc. The whole phrase is resonant of Heb 1.8, where Ps 44.7–8 LXX is referred to Christ, despite the fact that the Greek text in the LXX and in Hebrews 1.8 is ῥάβδος and not σκῆπτρον. … From at least the time of the Hebrews this Psalm, 45.6–7 (44.7–8 LXX) is used to express the divinity of Christ. When this quotation is combined with the Philippians theme of the rest of the pericope, it is clear that Clement believes that the power of God is now Christ's power. … In this fashion, the references to the preexistence theme and to the humiliation theme are combined in an *a majore ad minus* argument, offering Christ in his humility as an example for the community.[23]

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[22] Philippe Henne, 'Le sceptre de la majesté en Clem. 16,2,' *Studia patristica* 21, no. 3 (1989): 104. Also see his discussion in *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 49–59.

[23] Bumpus, *The Christological Awareness of Clement of Rome and Its Sources*, 68–69. Also see Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 113.

Here is an appeal to central assertions of the incarnational narrative to support the specific purpose of the letter.[24] After quoting the Old Testament passages on the humility of Christ, Clement returned to the point of his argument: 'You see, beloved men, what an example is given to us; for if the Lord in this way displayed humility, what should we do, who through him have come under the yoke of his grace?' (*1 Clem.* 16.17).[25] Because one does not appeal to questionable premises on which to base one's exhortations, we can conclude that Clement based his argument here on the exalted pre-incarnate existence and subsequent voluntary humility in the incarnation because he was confident that his readers in Corinth shared this fundamental incarnational understanding.

After citing more evidence of submission, including the world's submission to its Creator (*1 Clem.* 20.1–11), Clement returned to his main point—the peace and harmony expected of the redeemed, 'who have fled to his mercies through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom are the glory and the majesty unto the ages of the ages' (20.11–12). Christians were to avoid those who arrogantly exalted themselves in word and deed, but rather should 'fear the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us' (21.5–6). Clement regarded Jesus Christ to be truly human with a body of flesh and blood, while simultaneously exalting Christ with doxological language.

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[24] This use of the incarnational narrative—the person and work of Christ—as an basis for the author's exhortation is often missed by scholars identifying the authorities and sources used in *1 Clem.* See, for example, Gregory, '*1 Clement*: An Introduction,' 29–30).

[25] It is possible that Phil 2:6–11 stands behind Clement's thought in this passage, or at least that Phil 2 and *1 Clem.* 16.2 rely on a common view of the incarnational humility of the Son for their exhortations to unity through humility. Thierry links Christ's title as 'Lord' in *1 Clem.* 16.2 directly to the humiliation narrative, drawing conceptually on Phil 2:6–11. He writes, 'Dit betekent, dat Clemens Jezus juist daarin als Heer en Koning herkent, dat hij de Lijdende Knecht des Heren is' (J. J. Thierry, '"Jezus de Heer" bij Clemens Romanus en in de Didache,' *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 45 [1962]: 4).

Clement may have further revealed a christology of personal pre-incarnate existence when he wrote that Christ was speaking through the Holy Spirit in Psalm 34:11–17, 19 (*1 Clem.* 22.1–7). He also asserted the real bodily resurrection of Christ, whose resurrection was similar to our own—implying the full humanity and fleshly resurrection of Jesus (25.1). Indeed, Clement used various illustrations for the principle of renewal and resurrection, obviously a concept that seems to have been in debate in Clement's mind (24.2–5). We know that Clement regarded the resurrection as fleshly based on 26.3—and in particular the reference to Job 19:26 in that passage.

Clement then embarked on a lengthy discussion of holy living (*1 Clem.* 29.1–36.6). In the midst of this section, he pointed out that from Jacob came 'the Lord Jesus according to the flesh (ἐξ αὐτοῦ … κατὰ σάρκα)' (32.2). Regarding this passage, Lindemann notes: 'In 32,2 erwähnt er die Zugehörigkeit des κύριος Ἰησοῦς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα zum Geschlecht Jakobs, betont also die Zugehörigkeit Jesu zum jüdischen Volk und insofern auch die Inkarnation.'[26] Besides a clear assertion of the fleshliness of Christ, the inclusion of the phrase κατὰ σάρκα may also imply the christological background of a dual origination—one from heaven, the other from earthly humanity.[27]

At the conclusion of his exhortation to godly living, we learn that Jesus Christ himself stood as the center and source of salvation and Christian living. Clement exhorted believers to 'follow the way of truth' (τῇ ὁδῷ τῆς ἀληθείας) then added, 'This is the way (ἡ ὁδός), beloved, in which we found our salvation, Jesus Christ' (*1 Clem.* 36.1). Then, in 36:1–5, he presented a lofty description of Christ based presumably on a reading of Hebrews 1:3–13.[28] After a

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[26] Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 113.

[27] See Rom 1:3; 9:5; Ign. *Eph.* 20.2; *Smyrn.* 1.1. Because the concept of pre-incarnational existence is suggested elsewhere in the letter (*1 Clem.* 16.2, 17; 22.1; 42.1), the phrase κατὰ σάρκα makes most sense when read in light of an incarnational narrative.

[28] See Donald A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 129, 184; Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le*

comparison between the order and contents of Hebrews 1 and *1 Clement* 36, Lindemann notes:

> Beide Zitate werden durch die Einleitung jeweils als direkte Anrede Gottes an Christus erwiesen (1Clem 36,4a/Hebr 1,5a), wobei 1Clem lediglich die Frageform tilgt und statt dessen zwei Aussagesätze formuliert. … Angesichts dieses Befundes muß eine direkte Benutzung jedenfalls von Hebr 1 durch den [Verfasser] des 1Clem doch als wahrscheinlich gelten.[29]

Though the order and contents are compelling, it remains possible that both *1 Clement* and Hebrews were drawing on a common tradition, such as a hymn or testimonia.[30] Yet even if this is the case, it remains likely that the high christology of Clement's source argues for an early incarnational narrative as the background of and motivation for the citation.[31] On this chapter Grillmeier comments:

> The pre-existent Son of God, the brightness of the Father, was sent into the world as man, and as the high priest of mankind and their way to blessedness (ch. 36). As such, he is exalted above all creatures, the king of the world, the giver of all divine gifts, light, knowledge and immortality. After his exaltation he is united with the Father in glory and received divine honour.[32]

Later Clement reinforced the need for orderliness in ministry and conduct under the submission of the church leadership by

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Pasteur d'Hermas, 77–114.

[29] Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 20.

[30] See P. Ellingworth, 'Hebrews and 1 Clement: Literary Dependence or Common Tradition?,' *Biblische Zeitschrift* 23 (1979): 262–69; Andrew F. Gregory, '*1 Clement* and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,' in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 152–53; Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 48–58; Mees, 'Das Christusbild des ersten Klemensbriefes,' 314–15.

[31] See Mees, 'Das Christusbild des ersten Klemensbriefes,' 315.

[32] Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, 2d edn, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 86.

appealing to the Old Testament order of worship (*1 Clem.* 40.5). In this context, he exhorted the Corinthians to submit to designated rule and order (41.1). And just as sacrifices could only be offered in Jerusalem, believers had to remain in the fellowship of the church and function according to God's will (41.2–4). He then appealed to the special order of the church, of which Christ was the source: 'The apostles were evangelized (εὐηγγελίσθησαν) for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ was sent out from God. Thus, Christ is from God, and the apostles are from Christ. Therefore, both came in an orderly way of the will of God' (42.1–2). Here we see a tenet of the typical incarnational narrative: in the same way the apostles were sent from Jesus, Jesus was sent from God. Clement also appealed to the sending of the Son into the world to support the authority of duly appointed presbyters, a direct challenge to the insubordination in Corinth. The emphasis, though, is on the practical implication of the incarnational narrative, while the shared narrative itself is presupposed as the basis for the exhortation.

Clement then noted that the apostles were 'fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ' (*1 Clem.* 42.3), relaying that the apostles themselves appointed in the country and towns the church leaders for future believers (42.4). This eventually leads to the famous discussion of the successors of the apostles (44.1–3).

Clement therefore exhorted the Corinthians to follow the example of the saints of old, to count themselves among the righteous and elect (*1 Clem.* 46.1–3). He called for unity rather than schism, basing this principle on the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: 'Do we not have one God and one Christ and one Spirit of grace who was poured out upon us, and one calling in Christ?' (46.6). This triad of Father, Son, and Spirit may recall the early baptismal formula of Matthew and *Didache*.[33] By recalling this

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[33] This connection to a traditional baptismal confession appears to be missed or overlooked by many commentators, who rather focus on the lexical parallels and conceptual contrasts with Eph 4:4–6 and 1 Cor 8:6. See Bakke, *Concord and Peace*, 188–89; Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, 223; Annie Jaubert, ed., *Clément de Rome*,

baptismal rite, Clement referred to the resultant unifying work of the Spirit as a motivator for functional unity among the believers—indicating that Clement saw direct continuity with the apostolic community that originally experienced the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2. The initiatory and unifying rite of baptism recalled in this passage also pictured the narrative of the death and resurrection of Christ, so that the center and basis for unity became the 'one calling in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ)' (46.6). Therefore, the Corinthians should not divide the 'members of Christ,' that is, fellow believers baptized and made members of the church (46.7).

Épître aux Corinthiens: Introduction, texte, traduction, notes et index, Sources chrétiennes, vol. 167 (Paris: Cerf, 1971), 12; Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 493–94. Henne notes a possible parallel use of κλῆσις in Hermas *Mand.* 4.3.6 and its connection with baptism, but determines that the uses are not the same (*La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 292–95). However, other contemporary uses of κλῆσις appear to refer to the conversion and initiation into the Christian community, an entrée marked by baptism. *Barnabas* 16.8–10 refers to the entrance into the spiritual temple and forgiveness of sins as part of the calling. The full context of Herm. *Mand* 4.3.1–6 begins with an equation of repentance, baptism, and remission of sins (4.3.1), includes faith (4.3.3), calling (4.3.4), and everlasting life (4.3.6). Even the Pauline parallel in Eph 4:4 mentions 'baptism' and those things associated with baptism, not only the Father, Son, and Spirit, but also the unity of the one body (see 1 Cor 12:13). In fact, the response of repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins already has precedence in Acts 2:38–39, where Peter said, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call (προσκαλέσηται) to Himself.' Therefore, it seems a reasonable—if not likely—conclusion that *1 Clem.* 46.6 refers indirectly to the response to the call of God by the rite of baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus I must side with Bowe, who notes, 'Furthermore, the third phrase, "one Spirit of grace poured out upon us," recalls the Spirit received by Christians at baptism, and thus serves as a reminder of their original incorporation into the Christian assembly. The same emphasis informs the second question: "And is there not one calling in Christ?"' (Bowe, *A Church in Crisis*, 138).

The call to action involved rooting out the problem quickly, returning to humility (*1 Clem.* 48.1–6), the love of Christ, and obedience to his commandments (49.1–5). In his exaltation of love, Clement reflected the teaching of 1 Corinthians 13, emphasizing the harmony and unity of love. He ended this, however, with the following: 'Because of the love he had for us, Jesus Christ our Lord gave his blood for us by the will of God—both the flesh for our flesh and the soul for our souls' (*1 Clem.* 49.6). This is a clear assertion that Clement viewed Jesus Christ as having true flesh and blood of humanity and truly died. And later Clement seems to have asserted a high christology when he stated that many were 'chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom is the glory unto the ages of the ages' (50.7).

After calling the church to repentance (*1 Clem.* 51.1), and appealing to several biblical and real-world examples of humility (51–57), Clement launched a series of christologically significant assertions:

> For God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit, which is both the faith and the hope of the elect ones, that the one who performed without remorse the God-given ordinances and commantments in humility with constant kindness, this one has been enrolled and will be counted among the number of those being saved through Jesus Christ, through whom is the glory to him unto the ages of the ages. (58.2)

This exaltation of Jesus Christ and the Spirit suggests both a proto-trinitarian background as well as a high christology (see 46.6).[34]

Clement confessed belief that the Creator would preserve 'the number of his enumerated elect in the whole world (ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ)' by means of 'his beloved servant Jesus Christ, through whom he called us from darkness into light, from ignorance into

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[34] Bumpus notes, 'The theme of Jesus as reflection of the Father is encountered again (It is one basis of his authority as teacher.) in 58.2 and is perhaps an elaboration of Wisdom categories where personified Wisdom is now identified with Jesus' (Bumpus, *The Christological Awareness of Clement of Rome and Its Sources*, 176).

knowledge of the glory of his name' (*1 Clem.* 59.2). Again, Christ stands at the center of the Creator's plan of election and redemption, part of the incarnational narrative of the Creator's sending his divine Son to become human, and to become, as it were, 'his beloved servant' (59.2). This passage also links a catholic concept of the elect ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ to the calling in Jesus Christ.

Clement then began a lengthy prayer to the Creator God which extends from *1 Clement* 59.3 through 61.3.[35] From the start the Creator God was regarded as the 'originator of all creation (ἀρχεγόνον πάσης κτίσεως)' and the 'most high among the highest ones,' so that no distinction could be made between the creative Demiurge and the highest God, as in later gnostic systems (59.3). Clement also brought together under this one God both spirit and flesh, as he alone is 'benefactor of spirits God of all flesh (θεὸν πάσης σαρκὸς)' (59.3). He reemphasized that it was through Jesus Christ, God's beloved servant, that Christians were taught, sanctified, and honored (59.3).

The next mention of Christ as the servant of God is found in *1 Clement* 59.4: 'May all the nations come to recognize that you are the only God, and Jesus Christ is your servant, and we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.' This statement need not be regarded as a denial of the deity of Christ in preservation of a strict monotheism; rather, the addition of 'Jesus Christ' to this 'pastiche of Old Testament quotations and allusions'[36] appears to actually incorporate the Son into the monotheistic confession while asserting his role in submission to the Father—a common function of the Son within the incarnational narrative.

Clement ended his prayer of praise, thanks, and petition with a christological doxology: 'The one who alone is able to do these

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[35] On the structure of this prayer, see Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 162–75; Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 583–623.

[36] See Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, 2d rev. edn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 97. Holmes suggests Clement drew from the following passages: Num 27; Deut 32; 1 Sam 2; 1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 5, 19; Job 5; Ps 32, 79, 95, 100, 119 (LXX 31, 78, 94, 99, 118); Isa 13; 57; Ezek 36; Jdt 9; Sir 16; Eph 1.

and more good things for us—we confess to you through the high priest and defender of our souls, Jesus Christ, through whom be to you the glory and the majesty both now and unto the generation of generations and unto the ages of the ages. Amen' (61.3).[37] Clement then summed up his argument by exhorting his readers to unity and humility (62.1–63.4). The church in Rome had even sent wise, trusted men to be witnesses between Rome and Corinth, and, presumably, to make sure that the dissension be stopped and peace restored (63.4).[38]

The evidence from *1 Clement* may now be summarized. The pre-incarnate existence of the exalted Son is seen in several passages (22.1–7; 42.1–2; 46.6; 50.7), but especially in the statement that Christ as the majestic scepter of God could have come with pomp, but instead came in humility.[39] The incarnational union of the Son with fleshly humanity is affirmed in 16.2, 17; and 49.6; and the true birth and life of Christ is suggested by the emphasis on the human lineage of Christ from the line of Jacob (32.2). The suffering and death of Christ are emphasized repeatedly and serve as a central soteriological theme in Clement (7.3–4; 12.7; 21.6; 49.6). The true fleshly bodily resurrection of the Son is affirmed in connection with the truth of resurrection in general (24.1–5; 25.1; 26.3; 42.3), and the heavenly assumption is stated or assumed by the doxological language used in reference to Christ (36.1–5).

Several things become clear regarding the christology of *1 Clement* and its relationship to catholic Christianity, conclusions that relate primarily to the situation in the church at Rome and indirectly to the church in Corinth. For Clement neither christology nor the incarnational narrative was treated as a disputed issue. His incarnational expressions are straightforward statements for which he expected agreement from his readers in Corinth. Clement therefore felt confident in resting key arguments of his exhortation

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[37] Two more christocentric doxologies conclude this epistle (*1 Clem.* 64; 65.2).

[38] The names of these witnesses appears to be those of 65.1: Claudius Ephebus, Valerius Bito, and Fortunatus.

[39] Harnack, 'Das Schreiben der römischen Kirche an die Korinthische,' 59.

upon christological foundations, as Mees notes, 'Zudem führt der Verfasser seine Ermahnungen und Drohungen auf Jesus Christus zurück, legt sie ihm in den Mund und weist auf ihn als Modell und Beispiel eines echt christlichen Lebens.'[40]

The relationship between Rome and Corinth at the end of the first century, therefore, suggests an existing unity regarding the incarnational narrative. Just as one could anticipate the presence of the incarnational narrative in Asia Minor based on the indirect testimony of Ignatius in his letters to Asian churches, one can also expect Christians in Achaia to have shared the christological understanding of *1 Clement* based on the correspondence from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth. In fact, this is what we will see presently by means of the important direct testimony of Aristides of Athens.

Figure 19: Elements of the incarnational narrative in *1 Clement*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*1 Clem.* 22.1–7; 42.1–2; 46.6; 50.7
2) Incarnational union	*1 Clem.* 16.2, 17; 49.6
3) Birth and life	*1 Clem.* 32.2
4) Suffering and death	*1 Clem.* 7.3–4; 12.7; 21.6; 49.6
5) Bodily resurrection	*1 Clem.* 24.1–5; 25.1; 26.3; 42.3
6) Heavenly assumption	*1 Clem.* 36.1–5

ARISTIDES OF ATHENS

Aristides addressed his apology to the Emperor Hadrian around 125 CE.[41] Beginning with an explanation of the path he took to his

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[40] Mees, 'Das Christusbild des ersten Klemensbriefes,' 298.

[41] See Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, vol. 1, *From Paul to the Age of Constantine* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 196–97. However, Pouderon writes, 'Même si nous ne rejetons pas

faith in one God, the all-powerful cause of created things, he then described the nature of God in classic philosophical terms (*Apol.* 1), following this assertion of the nature of God with an investigation of the peoples among humankind to see which most accurately portrayed God in their philosophy and worship (*Apol.* 2). He thus classified mankind into four groups: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians. It is important to note that Aristides made no mention of prominent diverse sects among Christians. Even though the Barbarians, Greeks, and Jews themselves were characterized by inner diversity, he portrayed each of these large groups as definable by their unique origins and beliefs. We can therefore assume that whatever diversity prevailed among the Christian churches at the time, Aristides determined to focus on the 'catholic' identity of Christians—those things that marked their unique identity as a united group.

Thus, both the Barbarians and Greeks, Aristides said, believed in numerous gods with various descendents. And he briefly traced the history of the Jews from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to the twelve sons, associating them with the law. Aristides finally set forth the distinct identity of Christianity, intending to speak on behalf of all Christians everywhere:

> The Christians, then, trace the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah; and he is named the Son of God Most High. And it is said that God [or 'he'] came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed

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entièrement l'hypothèse d'une seconde redaction contemporaine du principat d'Antonin (138–161)' (Bernard Pouderon et al., *Aristide: Apologie*, Sources chrétiennes, vol. 470 [Paris: Cerf, 2003], 37; compare Michael Lattke, 'Der Herkunft der Christen in der *Apologie* des Arisitdes: Baustein zu einem Kommentar,' in *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen*, ed. Geoffrey Dunn and Wendy Mayer, Supplements to Vigiliae christianae, vol. 132 [Leiden: Brill, 2015], 48). The Greek and Syriac text is that of Pouderon. The English translation is from J. Rendel Harris, ed., *The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians*, 2d edn, Texts and Studies, ed. J. Armitage Robinson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1893).

himself with flesh; and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man. This is taught in the gospel, as it is called, which a short time was preached among them; and you also if you will read therein, may perceive the power which belongs to it. This Jesus, then, was born of the race of the Hebrews; and he had twelve disciples in order that the purpose of his incarnation might in time be accomplished. But he himself was pierced by the Jews, and he died and was buried; and they say that after three days he rose and ascended to heaven. Thereupon these twelve disciples went forth throughout the known parts of the world, and kept showing his greatness with all modesty and uprightness. And hence also those of the present day who believe that preaching are called Christians, and they are become famous. (*Apol.* 2)

Here all the essential movements of an incarnational narrative are presented in concise, quasi-creedal language which stands as a remarkable early testimony of the identity-forming nature of the incarnational confession. According to the Syriac version, Aristides regarded Christ as 'Son of God' and affirmed that 'God came down from heaven (ܘܣܝܟ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ)' and by a virgin birth took on flesh while still existing as 'Son of God' (*Apol.* 2.4).[42] The title 'Son of God' appears once in both the Syriac and Greek versions (ܕܒܪܗ ܘܐܠܗܐ = ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), and the context clearly indicates a pre-incarnate heavenly origin. However, the most striking phrase, 'God came down from heaven,' differs in the Greek, which reads either 'he came down from heaven by the Holy Spirit (ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ καταβάς)' or, if the punctuation is altered, 'who is named the Son of God Most High by the Holy Spirit' (Greek text, 15.1).[43] On the textual difficulties of this passage, Robinson writes:

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[42] On the 'creed' of Aristides, see Harris, ed., *Apology of Aristides*, 23–25.

[43] This latter punctuation is followed by Pouderon et al., *Aristide: Apologie*, 286–87: 'On reconnaît en lui le Fils du Dieu Très-Haut dans le Saint-Esprit; descendu du ciel pour le salut des hommes et engender d'une vierge sainte.' Also see comments in Lattke, 'Der Herkunft der Christen in

> The most serious change is that in the Syriac, where the word 'God' is inserted as the subject of the verbs which follow. The passage is one which was more likely than any other in the whole piece to tempt later writers to make changes of their own. It is to be noted that here the Greek in spite of its additions represents the original Apology much more faithfully than the Syriac does.[44]

This does not, however, mean that Aristides would necessarily have avoided calling Jesus 'God' for theological reasons. We know from earlier Christian literature at the time that Jesus was by this time often called θεός. However, assigning this title in this particular address would have confused far more than it explained. What we are left with is an incarnational narrative that may allow for a divine Son, but does not explicitly declare it. Nevertheless, the heavenly pre-incarnate existence of the Son is quite clear.

Having outlined the distinction between the 'four classes' of mankind, Aristides visited each of these in greater depth to demonstrate the weakness of all but the Christian view (*Apol.* 3–14). As expected, Aristides presented Christians as those who alone found the truth. He wrote, 'But the Christians, O King, while they went about and made search, have found the truth; and as we learned from their writings, they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations' (*Apol.* 15).

In Athens around 125 CE, Aristides presented to the emperor the incarnational narrative as the essence of catholic Christianity

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der *Apologie* des Aristides,' 54.

[44] Harris, ed., *Apology of Aristides*, 79. Since both the Greek and Armenian versions agree against the Syriac in omitting 'God' as the subject of the descent from heaven, I conclude that the Greek reading was the original penned by Aristides (for the Armenian text and French translation, see Pouderon et al., *Aristide: Apologie*, 310–11). It is suggested that the Syriac and Armenian versions had a common Greek source, while the Greek version preserved in the Oxyrhynchos papyri had a tradition independent of the others, rendering an agreement between the Greek and Armenian versions rather significant, despite the high regard for the version preserved in the Syriac as a whole (ibid., 143–72).

(*Apol.* 2), passed down from the disciples after Jesus and a matter of public record. Thus, this narrative had to have been stable enough in Aristides's experience for him to claim before the emperor that it was the self-definition of catholic Christianity at the time. Thus, one can comfortably conclude that the incarnational narrative had prevailed in the recent memory of the church in Athens, a conclusion in harmony with the implied reception of *1 Clement* in nearby Corinth twenty years earlier. This network of evidences therefore leads to the conclusion that the incarnational narrative stood at the center of catholic identity in Achaia in the early decades of the second century.

Figure 20: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Aristides of Athens

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Apol.* 2
2) Incarnational union	*Apol.* 2
3) Birth and life	*Apol.* 2
4) Suffering and death	*Apol.* 2
5) Bodily resurrection	*Apol.* 2
6) Heavenly assumption	*Apol.* 2

PHILIPPI IN MACEDONIA

I have already discussed Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* as it relayed direct evidence for the status of the incarnational narrative in Asia Minor in the early second century (see above, pp. 205–210). This testimony of Polycarp also provides indirect evidence of the reception of the same incarnational narrative in Philippi. Polycarp's correspondence reveals that the Philippian church had received Ignatius after he departed from Troas (Pol. *Phil.* 9.1). Shortly after this encounter the church in Philippi requested that Polycarp send them copies of Ignatius's letters in possession of the Smyrnaean bishop (13.1). Polycarp then fulfilled their request with a transmittal letter as well as a copy of the Ignatian collection. Polycarp obviously expected the Philippians to receive the letters and their teaching concerning Christ without challenge (13:1–2).

Based on this correspondence, it is apparent that the Philippian church knew and respected Polycarp, and given Polycarp's own reception of the incarnational narrative and his acceptance and endorsement of Ignatius's specific explication of the Christian faith, the Philippians' inter-ecclesial relationship with Polycarp helps extend the reach of a catholic Christian identity centered on the incarnational narrative into Macedonia early in the second century. This web of associations between Polycarp in Asia Minor, Ignatius of Antioch, and the Philippian church in Macedonia corroborates the tentative findings of the previous chapter. Had the Philippians been averse to the catholic incarnational tradition of Ignatius and Polycarp, one would hardly expect the tone of fellowship seen in Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, and one would certainly not expect the church in Philippi to request the letters of Ignatius from Polycarp.

CONCLUSION: THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA

Based on the clear and direct testimony of Aristides and the indirect corroborating testimonies of *1 Clement*, Ignatius, and Polycarp, I have shown that the incarnational narrative was quite well-established in Achaia and Macedonia in the early second century. Especially from the public testimony of Aristides to non-Christians (around 125 CE), we see that the unique elements of this narrative formed the very center of expressed and public catholic identity at this time. It also served as the basis for Clement's exhortation to the Corinthians, implying that even the Corinthian Christians causing the schism were expected to be in agreement with the narrative. Finally, the Philippians' reception of the person of Ignatius, their apparent collegial relationship with Polycarp, and their eager reception of the Ignatian corpus all suggest a reception of the christocentric catholic identity championed by Ignatius and Polycarp.

Figure 21: Discernible references to the six movements of the incarnational narrative in Macedonia and Achaia

Writing	1 Pre-incarnate existence	2 Incarnational union	3 Birth and life	4 Suffering and death	5 Bodily resurrection	6 Heavenly assumption
1 Clem.	+	+	+	+	+	+
Aristides	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pol. Phil.	+	+	+	+	+	+

*Indirect Testimony (see comments)

CHAPTER 13. THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN ROME

In this chapter I will argue that the incarnational narrative that played a central role for catholic Christian identity in Ignatius of Antioch, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia was also early and foundational in Rome. Besides indirect evidence from Ignatius and Polycarp, the direct evidence of *1 Clement* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* confirms the presence and potency of the incarnational narrative.

REVIEW OF EVIDENCE FROM IGNATIUS

Based on the exposition in chapters 4–8, I concluded that Ignatius's letter to Rome revealed an incarnational christology that included the deity, fleshly humanity, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Because Ignatius did not appear to challenge any schisms or heresies in Rome, this suggests that the incarnational narrative formed the center of Ignatius's positive Christian identity even apart from polemical occasions. In his casual use of specific incarnational terms, it is evident that Ignatius presupposed that his christology would have been received by the Roman Christians without objection. And if Ignatius knew of Clement's letter to the Corinthians, perhaps through his stay in Smyrna with Polycarp, then this might explain why Ignatius would have been so confident in assuming his Roman readers shared this christology.

Though Polycarp knew of *1 Clement* by the time he wrote his letter to the church in Philippi, the question of unity and dating of that letter renders it possible that Polycarp had not yet received a copy of *1 Clement* by the time Ignatius arrived in Smyrna. However, if Polycarp's letter is regarded as a unity and dated close to the time of Ignatius's visit, then we can assume Polycarp knew and had read *1 Clement* and could have communicated to Ignatius his own

perception of the theological situation in Rome at the time based partly on *1 Clement* and partly on personal reports received through those who delivered correspondence to Rome. Based on the tone and content of Ignatius's letter, we can assume that Polycarp's appraisal of Rome was only positive. Though this adds only a second subjective perspective to the evidence, it is telling that two early catholic Christian leaders from Smyrna and Antioch both regarded the church in Rome as fellow members of the Christian meta-community upholding the incarnational christology that identified them as catholic.

At least from Ignatius's subjective perspective, then, the catholic Christianity which he expected to find at Rome was marked by an incarnational christology by the early second century. Furthermore, because no apparent ecclesiastical, personal, or social relationship had been established between Ignatius and the Roman Christians, we may suspect that the fellowship that provided the basis for Ignatius's appeal was a trans-geographical sense of community that rested on what Ignatius himself perceived to have been the central identifying mark of catholic Christianity: Christ's person and work. All of this suggests that Ignatius at least expected his letter and its contents to be received by the church in Rome.

Such a reception of Ignatius's letter is also borne out by direct evidence from the Roman church in the following generation. Irenaeus, who had been in Rome sometime near the middle of the second century and who had been sent to Lyons to serve as its bishop in the last quarter of the second century, quoted from *Romans* 4.1 in *Adversus haeresis* 5.28.4, prefacing the quotation with, 'As a certain man of ours said.' Irenaeus's quotation of Ignatius and his endorsement of Ignatius as *de nostris*, suggests that the letter of Ignatius had, in fact, been received by Rome, preserved by its recipients, distributed to other churches, and even read widely beyond his death. So, we may also assume that the theology of the letter had been acceptable to the Roman Christians and to those in the region who had copied and preserved it. Had the incarnational christology of the letter been offensive or unacceptable to Rome around 110 CE, Ignatius's letter would not have survived as a

'received' document, nor enjoyed the reputation it did.[1] Therefore, one may tentatively assume that the Roman communities addressed by Ignatius shared the same incarnational narrative received in Antioch, Asia Minor, Achaia, and Macedonia.

Figure 22: Elements of the incarnational narrative in Ignatius's *Letter to the Romans*

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Rom.* insc.; 3.3; 6.3
2) Incarnational union	*Rom.* 8.2
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Rom.* 6.1, 3
5) Bodily resurrection	*Rom.* 6.1
6) Heavenly assumption	

REVIEW OF EVIDENCE FROM *FIRST CLEMENT*

First Clement has already been discussed in detail in chapter 12, having served as indirect testimony regarding the reception of the incarnational narrative in Corinth (see above, pp. 221–240). However, the passages that refer to a high christology, the pre-incarnate existence of the Son, and the suffering and death of Christ also provide direct evidence of Rome's acceptance and promotion of the incarnational narrative. Though the deity of

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[1] Furthermore, the separate transmission history of Ign. *Rom.* could be accounted for by the Roman church's own copying and distribution of their letter received from Ignatius. Though Lightfoot believed Polycarp had been in possession of all seven Ignatian letters (Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 2: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. 1 [London: Macmillan, 1889], 424), Zahn argued that Polycarp had not retained a copy of *Romans* (Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien* [Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873], 293–94). If Zahn is correct, then Ignatius's letter to Rome survives to this day precisely because of its positive reception by the Romans, who were responsible for its preservation.

Christ was not expressed with terms such as θεός,[2] several passages place Christ in roles and identifications of equality with the Father that suggest a higher christology than merely a human Jesus or divinely inspired agent. And one can be sure that Clement embraced and affirmed a fully human and fleshly Christ. Also, various aspects of Clement's exhortations rested on christological foundations (see *1 Clem.* 16.2). He appealed to distinct tenets of the incarnational narrative as authoritative, just as he appealed to the Old Testament in building his argument. Because this letter was composed in the name of the whole church in Rome (*1 Clem.* inscr.), and because the letter was accompanied by church-sponsored delegates to Corinth (65.1), we can confidently assume that the theological content of *1 Clement* represented the official view of an identifiable catholic community in Rome at the end of the first century.

Figure 23: Elements of the incarnational narrative in
1 Clement

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*1 Clem.* 22.1–7; 42.1–2; 46.6; 50.7
2) Incarnational union	*1 Clem.* 16.2, 17; 49.6
3) Birth and life	*1 Clem.* 32.2
4) Suffering and death	*1 Clem.* 7.3–4; 12.7; 21.6; 49.6
5) Bodily resurrection	*1 Clem.* 24.1–5; 25.1; 26.3; 42.3
6) Heavenly assumption	*1 Clem.* 36.1–5

THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

Its perplexing language and imagery aside, the *Shepherd of Hermas* continues to vex scholars with regard to date, authorship, and integrity. The majority see the *Shepherd* as an edited work with two or more writers or redactors involved in its production between the

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[2] Unless one accepts θεοῦ as the original reading in *1 Clem.* 2.1.

latter half of the first century and first half of the second.[3] Yet the question of date and unity are less pressing for the purpose of this study, for the writing is generally assumed to have come to its final form before the middle of the second century, and scholars nearly universally accept a Roman provenance for the *Shepherd*.[4]

The presentation of Jesus Christ in the *Shepherd* is quite complex, possibly due to the apocalyptic and paraenetic nature of the work as well as the likely redaction of several segments into the final edition.[5] However, Henne suggests that the final redactor was

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[3] On the dating of this work, see Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 18–20. For a brief discussion of various views of redaction see Norbert Brox, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, vol. 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 29–33. The issues involved are complicated, and lie outside the scope of this study. However, I believe some type of development or growth of the document occurred between the years 80 and 140 CE, perhaps partially by the hand of the same author, conventionally called 'Hermas,' editing his own work throughout his life (see James S. Jeffers, 'Pluralism in Early Roman Christianity,' *Fides et Historia* 22 [1990]: 14; Robert Joly, 'Le milieu complexe du "Pasteur d'Hermas",' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993], 527–29; John Christian Wilson, *Five Problems in the Interpretation of the Shepherd of Hermas: Authorship, Genre, Canonicity, Apocalyptic, and the Absence of the Name 'Jesus Christ,'* Mellen Biblical Press Series, vol. 34 [Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1995], 9–37). The work itself states that the visions occurred at different times, and in no case was it meant to be understood as anything other than a collection of pieces written in stages over a period of time. As would be expected, there are numerous and varied answers to questions of stages of composition and the use of sources. See, for example, Alastair Kirkland, 'The Literary History of the Shepherd of Hermas,' *Second Century* 9 (1992): 87–102.

[4] See Joseph Verheyden, 'The *Shepherd of Hermas*,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 64–65.

[5] See Philippe Henne, *L'unité du Pasteur d'Hermas: Tradition et rédaction* (Paris: Gabalda, 1992); Philippe Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, Paradosis, ed. Dirk van Damme and Otto

generally successful at unifying the various layers into a coherent christology—'Notre étude montrera que les differences en matière de christologie sont moins grandes qu'il n'y paraît à première vue'—and suggests that even the most extreme theories of redaction do not preclude a study of a unified christology in Hermas.[6] Nevertheless, Hermas's sketchy portrait of Christ is still difficult to frame. Hauck notes,

> There are many puzzles in this puzzling little book, but one of the most persistent is its christology. Manifestly a Christian book, it bears no mention of the name of Jesus or Christ, no reference to cross, crucifixion, or resurrection. Equally manifest, however, is the importance of its christology. Its reference to the son of God, the Lord, the Holy Spirit, angels, archangels and soteriological issues has provided a fertile field for historical interpretation.[7]

When approaching the christology of the *Shepherd*, one would do well to follow the advice of Brox, who suggests that the ordering of the book 'ist nicht beliebig,' and therefore one must understand subsequent christological expressions in light of *Similitude* 5.2–7, 'weil das der umfassendste Text zum Thema ist und weil H hier (wie sich herausstellt) Voraussetzungen und Klärungen für die beiden dichtesten aller weiterer Aussagen des PH zur Christologie liefert.'[8]

Wermelinger, vol. 33 (Freiburg: Editions Universitaires, 1992), 149–55; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 9–10. Grillmeir suggests that several lines of confused tradition converge in the *Shepherd*, and concludes, 'Of the christology of the Shepherd of Hermas, we may say that it is a reflection of the christology of the church, not clearly understood' (Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, 2d edn, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* [London: Mowbrays, 1975], 56).

[6] Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 150, 55.

[7] Robert J. Hauck, 'The Great Fast: Christology in the Shepherd of Hermas,' *Anglican Theological Review* 75 (1993): 187.

[8] Brox, *Hirt des Hermas*, 486. Henne notes, 'La *Cinquième Similitude* est une des pieces les plus célèbres de toute la literature patrisique du

Beginning with the picture of Christ in *Similitude* 5, the Shepherd first provided the context of the parable as the question of a proper fast—not the abstention from food but the abstention from evil deeds with faith and a clean heart (*Sim.* 5.1.1–5). In the Shepherd's parable, a master of a field planted a vineyard and chose a certain slave who was reliable, respected, and honest.[9] The master charged the slave to fence in the vineyard until his return, with the promise that the slave would receive freedom if he obeyed the command (5.2.2). Having obeyed the command to fence in the vineyard, the slave noticed that weeds were growing there and took the initiative to cultivate the land so it would yield more fruit (5.2.3–4). When the master returned and saw that the slave had gone well beyond what he was instructed to do, he rejoiced greatly and, calling together his son and advisors, the master shared what the slave had done (5.2.4–6). Then, rather than merely giving the slave his freedom, the master rewarded him even more for his extra effort, making him joint-heir with his son (5.2.8). After a few days, the master held a feast and sent much food to the slave, who then passed the food to his fellow slaves (5.2.9–10). Upon news of the slave's benevolence, the master again expressed his pleasure and shared the news with his advisors and son (5.2.11).

Understanding that this parable was told in order to answer the question about true fasting, the practical implication immediately presents itself. The slave was a model of the ideal faithful servant ('reliable, respected, and honest'), called by the master and given a particular task, who went beyond what was simply required. Paraenetically, this is meant to be an ideal contrast to Hermas's own less-than-ideal approach to fasting. When Hermas had been asked by the Shepherd what he was doing, he had responded, 'As I have been accustomed, sir, thus I am fasting' (*Sim.* 5.1.2). An ideal fast, however, was to go beyond mere duty, just as the slave in the parable had done on the occasion of the responsibilities in the vineyard as well as the generous gift of the

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deuxième siècle' (*La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 157).

[9] On Roman cultural hierarchy, see Jeffers, 'Pluralism in Early Roman Christianity,' 4–5.

food. In each case the slave demonstrated concern for the master and concern for his fellow slaves (5.2.4, 9). This plain understanding of the parable makes sense in light of the Shepherd's own interpretation:

> 'Keep the commands of the Lord, and you will be acceptable to him, and you will be enrolled in the number of those keeping his commands. But if you do anything good besides the commands of God, you will earn for yourself more glory, and you will be honored before God more than you would have. Therefore, if you also add these [extra] acts of service while keeping the commands of God, you will rejoice, if you keep them according to my command' (5.3.2–3).

The Shepherd then noted that Hermas's fast was good only if he kept the other commandments, as the fast was meant to be a loving sacrifice in addition to his obligations (5.3.4–9).

The next explanation in *Similitude* 5.4–6, then, becomes a second interpretation of the parable, for the practical meaning of the parable seems to have already been given in 3.1–9 as it related to fasting.[10] Nevertheless, after some wrangling the Shepherd reluctantly offered Hermas a detailed christological interpretation. In the parable, the field is interpreted as the world and the master is the creator. The son in the parable is a symbol for the Holy Spirit, and the slave is interpreted as the Son of God.[11] The vines are the

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[10] On the three interpretations or applications of the single parable, see Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 160; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 168. The subsequent explanations of the parable do not actually fit the apparent purpose and context introduced by the narrative element in *Sim.* 5.1, so we are left wondering whether this may represent subsequent layers of redaction and interpolation (see comments in Philippe Henne, 'À propos de la Christologie du Pasteur d'Hermas: la cohérence interne des niveaux d'explication dans la Cinquième Similitude,' *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 72 [1988]: 573; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 168; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, 'The Christology of Hermas and the Interpretation of the Fifth Similitude,' *Augustinianum Rome* 37 [1997]: 278–80).

[11] Many orthodox readers, of course, would wish that the offensive

people planted by the Son (*Sim.* 5.5.2). The fences constructed by the slave are holy angels, while the weeds found by the slave and pulled up are the sins of God's servants. The food sent from the feast to the slave are the commands given to his people through the Son, and the advisors are the high ranking angels (*Sim.* 5.5.3).

Having heard this second, spiritual explanation of the elements of the parable, it appears that Hermas had the same kind of puzzled reaction many readers of the parable have today: 'Why, sir, is the Son of God set forth in the parable in the manner of a slave' (*Sim.* 5.5.5)? The Shepherd responded that the outward appearance was misunderstood. The parable had a deeper meaning: 'Listen, the Son of God is not set forth in the manner of a slave, but he is set forth in great glory and lordship (ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην κεῖτα καὶ κυριότητα)' (*Sim.* 5.6.1). The Shepherd then provided the christological interpretation of the parable, which must be used to interpret the rest of the passage:

> 'God planted the vineyard, that is, he created the people, and he handed [them] over turned to the Son. And the Son placed the angels in charge of them to preserve them; and he cleansed their sins by toiling at many things and by enduring many troubles, for no one is able to till a vineyard without trouble and labor. Therefore, in cleansing the sins of the people, he showed them the paths of life giving them the law which he received from his Father. You see that he is Lord of the people, having received all authority from his Father.' (*Sim.* 5.6.2–4).

It would not be unreasonable to understand this language in light of the christological passion and exaltation narrative that prevailed

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phrase, 'the son is the Holy Spirit' (ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιόν ἐστιν), were not part of this interpretation of the parable. In fact, some apparently took steps to make this wish come true, as is evidenced by fact that this entire phrase is missing from several manuscripts, including Codex Athous, the Palatine Latin translation, and the Ethiopic translation. See Martin Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament: Die Apostolischen Väter, vol. 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1923), 569.

in Rome at that time, wherein the cleansing of sin by the Son refers to his passion, while the power received from the Father refers to the exaltation.[12] Yet the Shepherd continued his explanation: 'The preexisting Holy Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ προόν), who created the whole creation, God placed in the flesh which he wanted (κατῴκισεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς σάρκα ἥν ἠβούλετο)' (*Sim.* 5.6.5). If this corresponds with the event in the parable in which the master selected the slave who was 'reliable, respected, and honest' (5.2.2), then this would refer to the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus at baptism rather than the incarnation.[13] What follows, then, is a brief account of the earthly ministry of Jesus:

> 'Therefore, this flesh in which the Holy Spirit dwelled (κατῴκησε), served the Spirit well, walking in reverence and purity, without at all defiling the Spirit. Therefore, having lived well and purely, having toiled together with the Spirit and having cooperated in every deed, having lived strongly and courageously, he chose a companion with the Holy Spirit; for the journey of this flesh was pleasing to the Lord, because while having the Holy Spirit, it was not defiled upon the earth. Therefore, as a counselor he took the Son and the glorious angels, in order that also this flesh, having served the Spirit blamelessly, might have a certain place of residence, and may not seem to have lost the reward of its servanthood.' (*Sim.* 5.6.5–7)

This passage describes the reward given to Jesus for his righteous life as the co-laborer with the Holy Spirit during his time on earth. Because of this, he received a reward. Rather than jettisoning the fleshly humanity after accomplishing the work on earth, the humanity is rewarded by assumption into the heavenly order.[14] There is nothing here in conflict with a full incarnational narrative.

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[12] Ibid., 570; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 178–79.

[13] The Greek word κατοικίζω is used in Jas 4:5 in a similar sense: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us (κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν).'

[14] The adoption of the fleshly humanity into the divine 'household' (*Sim.* 5.2.7) may be a subtle polemic against gnostic and docetic views that

Yet the author was interested in more than reciting the Jesus story in cryptic form. The author chose to focus on the in-dwelling or prophetic anointing of the Spirit during Christ's earthly ministry rather than the incarnation of the Son prior to the virgin birth in order to make a practical application to the Christian life: 'For all flesh (πᾶσα γὰρ σὰρξ) found undefiled and without spot, in which the Holy Spirit dwelled (κατῴκησεν), will receive a reward' (*Sim.* 5.6.7). The use of 'flesh' here seems to therefore be used as a metonymy for 'humanity,' or 'human people.'[15] Thus, we may likewise consider its use in describing the Holy Spirit dwelling in Jesus as similarly a reference to his entire humanity, not merely his physical, material aspect.[16] It is, however, a reference to the human person that takes up physical space—a 'place' where the Holy Spirit can dwell, as in a home or temple. The Shepherd directed the personal application of this in *Sim.* 5.7: 'Keep this flesh of yours pure and undefiled, in order that the Spirit who dwells in it may bear witness for it, that your flesh may be deemed righteous (δικαιωθῇ σου ἡ σάρξ)' (5.7.1). Then, the author affirmed a distinctively catholic notion of the value of the fleshly humanity— the justification of the flesh, which implies a future redemption of the flesh.

Such an emphasis on the future of the flesh, in light of the rhetorical basis given in the christological narrative described in *Similitude* 6.1–8, implies that in his glorification Jesus's flesh was also preserved and redeemed. The Shepherd said to Hermas:

> 'Be aware lest it rise up upon your heart that this flesh of yours
> is perishable (τὴν σάρκα σου ταύτην φθαρτὴν εἶναι), and lest

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the fleshly body would not be redeemed, but rather shed and discarded at death.

[15] See, for example, Num 16:22; Ezek 21:5 Zech 2:13; Lk 3:6; 1 Pet 1:24.

[16] Henne argues that the σάρξ in *Sim.* 5.6.5–7 does not, in fact, refer to Christ (the slave in the vision), but refers already to the general relationship between flesh and spirit, as in the end of 5.6.7 and all of 5.7.1–4 (Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 172–83). However, see Brox, *Hirt des Hermas*, 320–24.

you abuse it by some defilement. For if you defile your flesh, your will also defile the Holy Spirit; and if you defile your flesh, you will not live. … For both are in a mutual relationship (κοινά ἐστι), and one is not able to be defiled without the other. Therefore, keep both pure and you will live to God.' (*Sim.* 5.7.2, 4)

Grant represents an entire chorus of commentators who regard *Similitude* 5 as the author's understanding of the incarnation: 'The incarnation is described thus (Sim. 5, 6): God made the Holy Spirit dwell in the flesh which he chose, and this flesh served the Spirit well; therefore God chose the flesh as a fellow (*koinōnos*) of the Spirit and gave it a place of tabernacling.'[17] But does *Similitude* 5 actually present a non-incarnational adoptionist, agent, or Spirit-christology? Admittedly, the passage has been read in these ways by many scholars.[18]

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[17] Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, ed. Robert M. Grant (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 131.

[18] As in Dibelius, *Hirt des Hermas*, 574; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 181. Stewart-Sykes refers to the christology of Hermas as a 'Spirit-Christology' in which the Spirit of God dwelled in the flesh of Christ, who was 'obedient to the indwelling spirit, to the extent of identification' (Stewart-Sykes, 'The Christology of Hermas and the Interpretation of the Fifth Similitude,' 273). Harnack understood *Sim.* 5 thus: 'The Holy Sprit … is regarded as the pre-existent Son of God, who is older than creation, nay, was God's counselor at creation. The Redeemer is the virtuous man (σάρξ) chosen by God, with whom that Spirit of God was united. As he did not defile the Spirit, but kept him constantly as his companion, and carried out the work to which the Deity had called him, nay, did more than he was commanded, he was in virtue of a Divine decree adopted as a son and exalted to μεγάλη ἐξουσία καὶ κυριότης' (Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanen, vol. 1 [London: Williams & Norgate, 1905], 191, n. 1). Papandrea suggests that the *Shepherd* presents a confused 'Angel Adoptionism,' reading the parables as ontologically equating Christ with the 'angel of justification' and the 'archangel Michael' (James L. Papandrea, *The Earliest Christologies: Five Images of Christ in the Postapostolic Age* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016], 29.) And Vermes

However, a better case can be made for reading the parable as referring not to the adoption of a merely human 'son' by the divine Spirit, but as the coming of the Spirit to indwell and empower the incarnate Son of God for the work of his earthly prophetic ministry.[19] Only if a reader insists on interpreting the parable as the author's intended account of his christology do contradictions like Wilson's arise: 'In contrast to the adoptionistic Christology of Sim. V, Sim. IX displays a pre-existent Christology similar to that of the Fourth Gospel.'[20] Much of the apparent tension is relieved when one recognizes that the kind of dynamic relationship between Christ and the Spirit in the fifth parable is actually consistent with the roles of the Son and Spirit portrayed in the canonical gospels.[21] The indwelling work of the prophetic Spirit—given not only to the incarnate Christ, but also to all believers—does not stand in contrast to a high christology or an incarnational narrative.[22]

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calls Hermas's teaching 'the incarnation of the Holy Spirit' (Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014], 174). It should be noted, however, that if the *Shepherd* meant to teach an adoptionist christology, the 'adoption' is portrayed as occurring not at the baptism of Jesus, but as a reward for faithful service—including, it seems, the work of the slave that brings cleansing to the people (*Sim.* 5.6.3). That is, the *Shepherd's* adoptionism, if it is that, occurred after the death and resurrection of Christ, for it is only after the slave ('the Son of God') proved himself worthy that the master proposed adopting him as join heir with the heavenly rulers (5.2.7–8).

[19] Hauck also advances an interpretation of *Sim.* 5 that corrects the common 'adoptionism' view and emphasizes the paraenetic purpose of the parable, with the *Shepherd's* unqiue soteriological and anthropological emphases. See Hauck, 'The Great Fast,' 187–98.

[20] Wilson, *Five Problems in the Interpretation of the Shepherd of Hermas*, 76.

[21] See Isa 61:1–3; Mt 3:16 (=Mk 1:10–11; Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32) Mt 4:1 (=Lk 4:1); Mt 12:18, 28; Lk 4:14, 18; 10:21; 18:18–21; Jn 1:32–33, all of which refer to the Holy Spirit coming to anoint or indwell for prophetic ministry. There is no reason why the author of the *Shepherd* could not have understood the anointing work of the Holy Spirit in the incarnate Son of God in a similar way.

[22] See my comments on the compatibility of various christological

The interpretation that *Similitude* 5 affirms a Spirit-indwelling and anointing is strengthened when one realizes that the purpose of presenting the parabolic narrative was not to advance a christology, but to establish Christ as a model for all Spirit-indwelled Christians. If we see the empowerment of the Spirit in Christ as an exemplary model that all believers can emulate, the apparent christological problems are eased. Such an interpretation fits best with the author's paraenetic purpose. The author's desire for his readers to imitate Christ argues against the adoptionist interpretation of *Similitude* 5. Believers would not have been able to emulate a unique adoption of Christ as the Messianic Son of God, but they could emulate the cooperation with the indwelling Spirit and attain to the resurrection of the dead and the adoption as sons.[23]

Thus, the first interpretation (*Sim.* 5.3) addressed Hermas's matter of fasting. The second interpretation (*Sim.* 5.5–6) presented a deeper christological exposition of the details of the parable. Both of these (the practical and the christological) come together to present Christ as the perfect image or example in the final application of both interpretations (*Sim.* 5.7), which may be styled 'christiconic,' that is, Christ's life as a true, ideal man becomes a pattern to follow for all Christians.[24]

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portraits under the incarnational narrative in chapter one above, pp. 23–26. It is possible to hold to aspects of adoptionistic and agency narratives as functional christological descriptions within an overarching ontological incarnational meta-narrative if the subordinate narrative is not presented as an exhaustive or exclusive christological understanding. I believe a comparison of *Sim.* 5 and *Sim.* 9 provides an example of this.

[23] See, for example, Rom 8:15, 23; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5.

[24] I have adopted this term (adapting the concept for use in this present context) from Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 259–262.

Figure 24: Multiple interpretations of the fifth parable
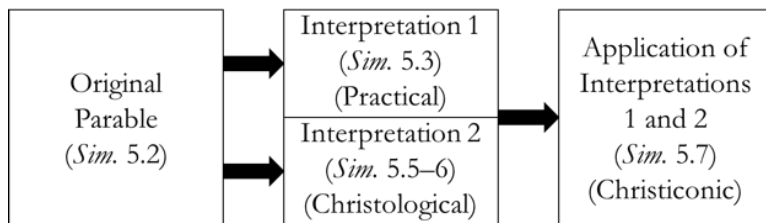
In light of this interpretation of *Similitude* 5, we can briefly examine a few other smatterings of christology found on other parts of Hermas's canvas. In *Similitude* 9, we find a number of significant christological assertions that give brief glimpses into the theology and thought of the author of the *Shepherd*. In 9.12.2, the interpreter explained to Hermas, 'The Son of God is prior in existence than all of his creation, so that he would be the counselor over his creation with the Father.'[25] At the same time, however, 'in the last days of the consummation he was made manifest' to save those who enter into the kingdom (9.12.3). In fact, nobody can enter the kingdom 'except through the name of his Son' (9.12.5). Later, the interpreter said, 'The name of the Son of God is great and incomprehensible (μέγα ἐστὶ καὶ ἀχώρητον), and he sustains the whole world. Therefore, if if all creation is sustained through the Son of God, what do you think about those called by him bearing the name of the Son of God and walking in his commands?' (9.14.5).

Also in the ninth parable, however, we find other puzzling assertions, as the angel of repentance told Hermas, 'I want to show to you what the Holy Spirit who spoke with you in the form of the

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[25] See Grant, *Apostolic Fathers: Introduction*, 131. Osiek rightly points out a caveat here: 'The preexistence of the Son is clearly stated in v. 2, but he is in good company: previously the church and the great angel are also said to be preexistent,' for which she cites *Vis.* 2.4.1 and 3.4.1 (Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 233). However, only the Son is called 'great and incomprehensible' who 'sustains the whole world' (*Sim.* 9.14.5).

church showed to you; for that Spirit is the Son of God' (*Sim.* 9.1.1).[26] Osiek writes:

> It is not correct to say that the church is therefore equated with the Son of God, any more than it is correct to say that the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are equated in *Sim.* 5.5. Rather here, a deeper meaning is assigned to the apparition of the woman, beyond that of church. Just as the incarnate Son is 'the perfect dwelling of the Holy Spirit in flesh,' so the church is the 'perfect dwelling of the Spirit' in the human community. The fact that this new meaning comes only here is typical of the additive style of the author, whereby new meanings are given to old images almost as an after-thought.[27]

Whatever the author was asserting, it seems implausible that he was ontologically equating the persons of the Spirit, the woman of the earlier visions, the Church, and the Son of God in a hypostatic sense.[28] Henne even urges that in many places the phrase 'holy spirit' is not to be taken as the third person of the Trinity as in later expressions of orthodoxy, but in a non-technical sense, as in the vision of the twelve virgins, who are symbols of twelve 'holy spirits'

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[26] The Greek text reads Θέλω σοι δεῖξαι ὅσα σοὶ ἔδειξε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ λαλῆσαν μετὰ σοῦ ἐν μορφῇ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας; ἐκεῖνο γὰρ τὸ πνεῦμα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν. See discussion on a similar analogy in *2 Clem.* 14.4, discussed below, pp. 282–285.

[27] Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 212.

[28] As troubling as it may be for a modern Western mindset, Hermas's visions do not adapt to the logic of categorical syllogisms any more than does the chaos of a sleeping man's dreams. While something is being affirmed in these visions, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with visions, dreams, or imaginitive fiction here, not with logical treatises. The idea that the symbols of a single parable would be unpacked with two distinct but related interpretations is not unique to *Sim.* 5. In fact, in *Sim.* 8—the parable of the willow tree—the Shepherd sets forth his interpretation this way: 'This great tree sheltering plains and hills and all the earth, is the law of God which was given to all the world; and this law is the Son of God proclaimed unto the ends of the earth' (*Sim.* 8.3.2).

of God. These are personifications of the moral effects or virtues of the Spirit, like Paul's 'fruit of the Spirit' (Gal 5:22–23; cf. *Sim.* 9.13.2–5). Thus, Henne concludes, 'Le terme «esprit» désigne la présence active d'une réalité céleste dans la «figure» de l'Eglise. L'identification au Fils de Dieu est d'ordre fonctionnelle et non ontologique.'[29] In this case, the 'holy spirit' refers to the holy, polymorphic apparition that appeared to Hermas in a form that carried multiple symbolic meanings, similar to the twelve symbolic 'holy spirits' of *Similitude* 9.13.2.

One perennial question that surfaces in the study of the christology of the *Shepherd* is whether the Son of God is presented as an angel. Some have interpreted 'Michael, the great and glorious angel' (ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ μέγας καὶ ἔνδοξος Μιχαήλ) of *Similitude* 8.3.3 as referring to the 'Son of God,' rendering a primitive 'angel-Christology.'[30] However, common adjectival descriptions do not necessarily prove personal identification. The description of Michael as ἔνδοξος does not necessarily mean that other beings described as ἔνδοξος—including the Son of God—are to be equated with Michael.[31] Nor does a similarity of functions determine equality of personal figures.[32]

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[29] Henne, *La christologie chez Clément de Rome et dans le Pasteur d'Hermas*, 254.

[30] See Dibelius, *Hirt des Hermas*, 572–76; Jules Lebreton, *Histoire du dogme de la Trinité des origines au Concile de Nicée* 3d edn, vol. 2, *De Saint Clément à Saint Irénée*, Bibliothèque de théologie historique (Paris: Beauchesne, 1928), 658–59; Halvor Moxnes, 'God and His Angel in the Shepherd of Hermas,' *Studia theologica* 28 (1974): 49–56. Others have regarded these figures to be distinct in the *Shepherd* (Stanislas Giet, *Hermas et les Pasteurs: Les trois auteurs du Pasteur d'Hermas* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963], 227–28; Graydon F. Snyder, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, The Apostolic Fathers, ed. Robert M. Grant, vol. 6, *The Shepherd of Hermas* [Camden, NJ: Nelson, 1968], 60–61).

[31] Gieschen does this by identifying the 'glorious man' (the Son of God) with the 'glorious angel' (Michael) (Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, Arbeiten zur Gesichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, vol. 42 [Leiden:

Gieschen acknowledges ὁ ἔνδοξος ἄγγελος could be a general description of this angel, but says it is more probable 'to see this as a technical title that calls to mind the theophanic Glory tradition. If this angel is distinguished from the myriads of angels due to his glory, then it is no ordinary glory, but the very Glory of the Lord. The adjective indicates that the Glorious Angel can also be identified with ὁ ἔνδοξος ἀνήρ.'[33] Gieschen's argument rests on a 'technical use' of ἔνδοξος which distinguishes this particular angel from others and equates him with the Son of God. However, in light of a complete analysis of every occurrence of the word in the Greek text of the *Shepherd*, the suggestion of a technical use for ἔνδοξος becomes highly improbable. The term ἔνδοξος is used to describe several 'glorious angels' (τοὺς ἐνδόξους ἀγγέλους) in *Similitude* 5.6.4 who are counselors with God regarding the 'slave.' Thus, ἔνδοξος is used as a general description of angelic beings, not a technical designation of an individual angel. Furthermore, these multiple glorious angels in *Similitude* 5.6.4 were described earlier in 5.5.3 as 'the holy angels who were first created' (οἱ ἅγιοι ἄγγελοι οἱ πρῶτοι κτισθέντες). This designation further identifies them with the 'holy angels of God, who were created first of all,' first appearing in *Vision* 3.4.1. They were given authority over creation to rule over it and build it up. Later in *Similitude* 9 these same six angels appear building the tower, described as 'tall and glorious' (ὑψηλοὺς καὶ ἐνδόξους) (*Sim.* 9.3.1). Then, 'a certain man exceedingly tall (ἀνήρ τις ὑψηλὸς τῷ μεγέθει), so that he exceeded the tower in height' (9.6.1) comes to inspect the tower accompanied by the six glorious angels and 'other glorious men (ἕτεροι πολλοὶ ἔνδοξοι).' This is the man who is described as 'the glorious man (ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ ἔνδοξος) who was lord of the whole tower' (9.7.1) and who is interpreted by the Shepherd as follows:

> 'Did you see the six men and the glorious and great man among them, who walks around the tower who rejected the

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Brill, 1998], 226).

[32] As in Moxnes, 'God and His Angel in the Shepherd of Hermas,' 49–56.

[33] Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 226.

stones from the building project? … The glorious man is the Son of God, and the six are glorious angels surrounding him right and left. Of these glorious angels, not one will enter before the presence of God without him; whoever does not receive his name, he will not enter into the kingdom of God.' (*Sim.* 9.12.7–8)

It is evident, then, that relying on ἔνδοξος to distinguish the 'glorious' angel, Michael, from other angels, and then to equate him with the 'glorious man,' the Son of God, rests on an illegitimate methodology.[34] It would, in fact, be more reasonable to regard Michael as one of the six 'glorious angels' who were created first and given authority to rule over the earth.[35] In any case, relying on the adjectival description of ἔνδοξος to equate Michael and Christ simply does not work. The fact remains, therefore, that the *Shepherd* never equates the Son of God with an 'angel.'

Though it is true that the death and resurrection movements of the incarnational narrative are not explicitly spelled out in any particular passage of the *Shepherd*, the discussion of baptism as the seal of initiation into the kingdom in *Similitude* 9.16.1–7 is best understood in its Christian sense of identification with the death and resurrection of the Christ.[36] We read, 'Therefore also those who had fallen asleep received the seal of the Son of God and entered into the kingdom of God; for before a person bears the name of the Son of God, he is dead, but when he has received the seal, he puts away death takes up life. So, the seal is the water; they thus go down into the water dead and they rise up living' (9.16.3–4).

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[34] In fact, the Shepherd himself is described as ἀνήρ τις ἔνδοξος (*Vis.* 5.1.1), and because the Shepherd was sent by the 'venerable angel' or 'glorious angel,' Michael, they cannot be equated (see *Vis.* 5.1.2; *Sim.* 9.1.3). 'Glorious man' is simply not a title or technical appellation.

[35] See especially Dan. 10:13, where Michael is described as εἷς τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρώτων, which is conceptually similar to οἱ ἅγιοι ἄγγελοι οἱ πρῶτοι κτισθέντες in *Sim.* 5.5.3.

[36] On the seal as baptism here, see Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 238. Also see similar use in *2 Clem.* 7.1–8.6.

Besides the important fifth and ninth parables, other passages in the *Shepherd* shed some light on the overall christological perspective of the book. In *Vision* 2.2.8, the Father is said to have sworn 'according to his Son' (κατὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ). The author of Hebrews makes the point that God swears by himself (καθ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ) 'since He could swear by no one greater' (Heb 6:13), drawing on the general principle that 'men swear by one greater [than themselves]' (ἄνθρωποι γὰρ κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος ὀμνύοθσιν) (6:16). Though one cannot assume that the author of the *Shepherd* had this passage or principle from Hebrews in mind,[37] the strangeness of the phrase may imply a high christology in the mind of the author.[38]

In the *Shepherd* we also catch glimpses of the author's sense of catholicity centered on the preaching concerning Jesus. In *Similitude* 8 the interpreter explained,

> This great tree sheltering plains and hills and all the earth (πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν), is the law of God which was given to all the world (ὅλον τὸν κόσμον); and this law is the Son of God proclaimed unto the ends of the earth (ὁ κηρυχθεὶς εἰς τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς). And those under the shelter are the people who heard the preaching (κηρύγματος) and believed in him.' (*Sim.* 8.3.2)

This proclamation spread throughout the world by means of 'apostles and teachers of the Son of God (ἀπόστολοι καὶ διδάσκαλοι … τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ)' (*Sim.* 9.15.4) and the means of receiving this preaching was through the seal of baptism—which we may take as a baptismal identification with the Son of God's death and resurrection. Furthermore, the image of the twelve mountains in *Similitude* 9.17 reinforces a universal aspect of the

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[37] However, if the author of *1 Clem.* knew the book of Hebrews (see *1 Clem.* 17.1; 36.2–5; 43.1; 56.4), it is plausible that the author of the *Shepherd* also knew of this document and thus intentionally connected his own text and his readers to the concept of God swearing by himself in Heb 6. This would thus create a subtle but powerful allusion to an even higher christology.

[38] Dibelius, *Hirt des Hermas*, 448; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 56.

Shepherd's message as well as the author's concept of early catholicity. The twelve mountains represent 'twelve tribes inhabiting the whole world,' to which 'the Son of God was proclaimed through the apostles' (9.17.1). The mountains, which are 'various' and 'different from each other,' are 'all the nations dwelling under heaven' (9.17.2, 4). Nevertheless, 'having heard and having believed, they were called by the name of the Son of God; therefore having received the seal [baptism], they had one thought and one mind (μίαν φρόνησιν ἔσχον καὶ ἕνα νοῦν), and one faith became theirs (μία πίστις αὐτῶν ἐγένετο), and one love' (9.17.4). This 'one faith' of believers, which constituted one thought and mind reflects a sense of catholic unity centered on the christological narrative pictured in the seal of baptism.

In conclusion, though the author's picture of Christ is somewhat obscured by his profuse use of fluid symbols and images, one can discern the basic contours of an incarnational narrative. The pre-incarnate existence of the Son of God is clearly affirmed, as the Son of God is older than creation, is God's counselor in creation, and is the incomprehensible sustainer of the whole world (*Sim.* 9.12.2; 14.5). The incarnational union of this Son with fleshly humanity is implied in the description of the 'slave' of *Similitude* 5 having 'flesh' (5.6.5–7), while also being described as exceedingly 'glorious' (9.7.1). The true suffering and death of the Son seem to stand behind the parable's statements about cleansing the people's sins through great labor and toil, and as part of the image of death and resurrection in the seal of baptism (*Sim.* 5.6.2; 9.16.3–4). The true fleshly bodily resurrection of the Son is implied by the emphasis on the asumption of the flesh as joint heir for faithful service in *Similitude* 5.6.7, as the description of the flesh as 'immortal' in 5.7.2, 4, and as part of the image of death and resurrection in the sign of baptism (9.16.3–4). Finally, the heavenly assumption of Christ is implied in the exalted state of the slave— the assumption of the flesh into heaven (*Sim.* 5.7.2, 4). Thus, behind its perplexing symbols and language, one can discern the basic tenets of the incarnational narrative in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, upon which the author's concept of catholic Christianity appears to rest as the content of worldwide apostolic preaching (9.17.1–4).

Figure 25: Elements of the incarnational narrative in the
Shepherd

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Sim.* 9.12.2; 14.5
2) Incarnational union	*Sim.* 5.6.5–7; 9.7.1
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Sim.* 5.6.2; 9.16.3–4
5) Bodily resurrection	*Sim.* 5.6.7; 5.7.2, 4; 9.16.3–4
6) Heavenly assumption	*Sim.* 5.7.2, 4

POLYCARP AND ANICETUS

In his *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24, Eusebius of Caesarea relayed the details of the second century Quartodeciman controversy regarding the time of the celebration of the resurrection of Christ—either on the fourteenth of Nisan according to the Jewish calendar, even if it fell on a week day (the tradtion of Asia Minor), or on the following Sunday to keep the eucharistic celebration on the day of the Lord's resurrection (the custom of Rome, Alexandria, and other major churches).[39] Though primarily focusing on the late second century conflict between Victor of Rome and the Asian bishops (*Hist. eccl.* 5.23.2–5.24.10), Eusebius quoted a letter by Irenaeus written around 190 CE that provided a window into a similar controversy settled by Anicetus of Rome and Polycarp of Smyrna around 150 to 155.[40]

> And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, and they disagreed a little about certain other things, they immediately made peace with one another, not caring to

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[39] See Robert L. Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 38–39.

[40] Johannes B. Bauer, *Die Polykarpbriefe, übersetzt und erklärt*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, vol. 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 11.

quarrel over this matter. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated; neither could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it as he said that he ought to follow the customs of the presbyters that had preceded him. But though matters were in this shape, they communed together, and Anicetus conceded the administration of the eucharist in the church to Polycarp, manifestly as a mark of respect.[41]

Although the two bishops could not come to an agreement regarding the proper day for the annual celebration of the resurrection, several things regarding second century incarnational christology and early catholic Christianity become apparent. First, we see a clear catholic consciousness demonstrated by the fact that Polycarp and Anicetus dialogued regarding their agreements and disagreements in the first place. These two communities of Rome and Asia Minor identified each other as part of the catholic Christian tradition according to whatever standards of Christian identity constituted such a definition.

Second, while both Eusebius and many church historians since have focused on the matters that constituted the conflict between Rome and Asia, we may also take note of what practical and doctrinal issues were not at issue. As a sign of peace and fellowship between the two communities, both celebrated the eucharist together (*Hist. eccl.* 5.24.17). Because Polycarp shared Ignatius's understanding of the eucharist as a community confession of unity centered on the proper incarnational narrative, we may assume that Polycarp found a compatible understanding of eucharistic confession in Rome.[42] In any case, he did not find an

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[41] Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.16–17. English translation is from Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 1, *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine* (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1890).

[42] See especially Ignatiusus statement in *Smyrn.* 7.1, where Ignatius expressed concerns about those false teachers who separated from Polycarp's eucharist 'on account of not confessing the eucharist to be the

unacceptable christological confession regarding the eucharist. Besides observance of the eucharist, which emphasized the bodily suffering and death of Christ, both Polycarp and Anicetus were in agreement that the churches throughout the world should celebrate the actual day of Christ's resurrection. These two components of the incarnational narrative—the death and resurrection—were not at issue.

Third, considering Polycarp's reception of a high christological confession, demonstrated both by his close fellowship with Ignatius, his reception and promotion of the Ignatian corpus, and the character of christology in Asia at this time, I would argue that the very nature of the greatest dispute between Polycarp and Anicetus—as well as its resolution—is significant. Unless one accepts an improbable conclusion that Polycarp's christology was of less importance to him than was the day on which *Pascha* was to be celebrated, then the very fact that Polycarp and Anicetus debated the latter rather than the former suggests that the former was not an issue. This gives us an indirect glimpse at the stability of the incarnational narrative in Rome at this time.

In sum, both the dispute and peace between Polycarp and Anicetus indicate that in the mid-second century the Christians of Rome and the Christians of Asia found themselves in agreement on the identity-defining doctrinal and practical issues. We have both direct and indirect evidence regarding Polycarp's view of the incarnational narrative, and based on this we may assume that had Polycarp discovered that the Roman church differed from him on those central issues, the Asian bishop would have never engaged in a less weighty debate concerning days of worship, nor would he have celebrated the eucharist with the Roman bishop before

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flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and in kindness the Father raised up.' It would be difficult to believe that the view of the eucharist as a confession of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ was not shared by Ignatius and Polycarp, or that Polycarp would have observed the eucharist with Anicetus if he, too, did not share this view of the eucharist.

departing in peace.[43] In this instance my argument necessarily moves from the known to the unknown (from Polycarp's concept of catholic Christianity to the Christian identity at Rome), and from the lesser to the greater (from the Quartodeciman controversy to a presupposed christological communion).

Figure 26: Elements of the incarnational narrative in the dialogue between Polycarp and Anicetus

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	
2) Incarnational union	*Hist. eccl.* 5.24
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Hist. eccl.* 5.24
5) Bodily resurrection	*Hist. eccl.* 5.24
6) Heavenly assumption	

CONCLUSION: THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN ROME

Based on the direct evidence from *1 Clement* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* as well as the indirect evidence afforded by Ignatius of Antioch's letter to the Roman Christians and the account of Polycarp's debate with bishop Anicetus of Rome, we may conclude that the incarnational narrative was well-established in Rome by the beginning of the second century. This testimony harmonizes with the thesis that second century incarnational christology was a fundamental mark of early catholic Christian identity throughout the world. At the same time, this testimony seems to demonstrate the great diversity in Rome among catholic Christians—a diversity as great as the difference in content, emphasis, genre, and thought as one finds in *1 Clement* and the *Shepherd of Hermas.*[44] Yet this

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[43] See Norbert Brox, 'Der Konflikt zwischen Aniket und Polykarp,' *Concilium* 8 (1972): 14–18.

[44] For a detailed study of the diversity in Rome at this time, see

diversity did not preclude a sense of catholic unity or inter-community fellowship as is also testified by the evidence presented in this chapter.

Figure 27: Discernible references to the six movements of the incarnational narrative in Rome

Writing	1 Pre-incarnate existence	2 Incarnational union	3 Birth and life	4 Suffering and death	5 Bodily resurrection	6 Heavenly assumption
Ign.	+	+		+	+	
1 Clem.	+	+	+	+	+	+
Shepherd	+	+		+	+	+
Polycarp/ Anicetus		+		+	+	
Pol. Phil.	+	+	+	+	+	+

*Indirect Testimony (see comments)

James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

CHAPTER 14. THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE IN *SECOND CLEMENT* AND *BARNABAS*

While the preceding examinations of writings from Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, and Rome have provided evidence of a common incarnational narrative that served as a unifying confession of catholic Christianity in the early second century, two documents dated in the first half of the second century have proved difficult to contextualize. Though their exact dates and locations are difficult to determine, the testimonies of *2 Clement* and the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas* still provide evidence for the incarnational narrative beyond Asia Minor, thus helping to establish the geographical catholicity of the incarnational narrative in regions beyond these two.

SECOND CLEMENT

Holmes sums up the situation with regard to *2 Clement* thusly: 'Almost nothing is known with any certainty about its author, date,

or occasion.'[1] Nevertheless, the testimony of *2 Clement* does, in fact, aid in establishing a geographical expansion of the incarnational narrative beyond Antioch and Asia Minor before 150 CE. Because scholars tend to place *2 Clement* in Rome, Corinth, Egypt, or even Syria,[2] this writing provides corroborative evidence for the nature

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[1] Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, 2d rev. edn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 102. For helpful overviews of perspectives on the identity of the author, see Wilhelm Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, vol. 3, ed. Norbert Brox, Georg Kretschmar, and Kurt Niederwimmer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 56–58; and Christopher Tuckett, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers, ed. Paul Foster, Andrew Gregory, and Christopher Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14–17. These include, among others, the traditional (though almost obsolete) identification as Clement of Rome (late first century), Hyginus of Rome (mid second century), Soter of Rome (late second century), and Dionysius of Corinth (late second century). Pratscher is correct when he concludes, 'Eine Feststellung der Person des Verfassers ist angesichts der Quellenlage aussichtslos' (Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 58). For various views on the date of *2 Clem.*, see E. Baasland, 'Der 2. Klemensbrief und frühchristliche Rhetorik: "die erste christliche Predigt" im Lichte der neueren Forschung,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 88–89; Tuckett, *2 Clement,* 62–64.

[2] The question of provenance has had a number of answers. Some regard *2 Clem.* as having originated in Rome, thus explaining its close association with *1 Clem.* (W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 121, 46). Koester places it in Egypt prior to 150 CE (Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982], 233–36). Both Lightfoot and Donfried regarded the work as having originated in Corinth (Karl P Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 38 [Leiden: Brill, 1974], 1–48; J. B. Lightfoot, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 1*, 2d edn, vol. 2, *S. Clement of Rome* [New York: Olms, 1973], 194–208, 197–99, 202). Ehrman, however, suggests that all theories about the author and location of *2 Clem.* 'must

of catholic Christianity beyond Asia Minor, the place of origin of the Ignatian epistles and Polycarp's letter. Because my thesis depends on establishing a strong widespread presence of the incarnational narrative outside the primary testimony of Ignatius, even the late testimony of *2 Clement* with still uncertain provenance still serves to advance my thesis, if only to a small degree.[3]

An analysis of *2 Clement* reveals that its christological content not only aligns with the incarnational narrative seen in other catholic writings from this same period,[4] but also plays an important role in the paraenesis of the homily itself. Tuckett rightly observes that the author's christology 'forms the basis for his prime focus, i.e. the appeal for proper ethical behaviour.'[5] Likewise,

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remain speculative' because 'there simply is not enough evidence for a firm determination' (Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, *1 Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache*, Loeb Classical Library, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, vol. 24 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003], 158). Also see Paul Parvis, '*2 Clement* and the Meaning of the Christian Homily,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 37.

[3] Pratscher acknowledges that Roman provenance is the 'weitesten verbreitete Annahme,' that Corinthian origin is close in popularity, and an Egyptian (especially Alexandrian) provenance is a widely held view, though he also mentions Syria also as a 'Möglichkeit' (Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 59–61). Of the four options, he regards Corinth as least likely and Rome as possible but also unlikely; between Syria or Egypt, Pratscher contends that Egypt seems slightly more probable. Tuckett favors a Roman provenance, regards an Egyptian origin as possible, and considers the arguments for a Corinthian and especially Syrian provenance as unconvincing (Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 58–62. Even if the unlikely Syrian origin of *2 Clem.* were true, the testimony from *2 Clem.* would still help corroborate the strong testimony of Ignatius and the less impressive evidence afforded by *Did.*, *Gos. Pet.*, and *Odes Sol.*

[4] Vermes sees in *2 Clem.* A 'high Christology, on par … with that of Ignatius of Antioch' (Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014], 165).

[5] Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 68.

regarding the role of christology in the argument of *2 Clement*, Lindemann writes:

> Die christologischen Aussagen im 2Clem verbinden sich zwar häufig mit paränetischen Konsequenzen (s. zu 1,3; 3,3; 9,6; 14,3; 17,6), aber vor einer Abwertung des theologischen Ernsts dieser Christologie sollte man sich hüten …, ebenso vor einer pauschalen Deutung des Befundes als 'Moralismus' oder 'Gesetzlichkeit' (zu Öffner); denn die Paränese gründet eben in der Christologie, nicht umgekehrt.[6]

Second Clement begins with a statement many regard as indicating a high christology: 'It is necessary for us to think of Jesus Christ, as we think of God—as judge of the living and the dead' (*2 Clem.* 1.1).[7] Although Lindemann rightly states that 'Jesus Christus wird vom [Verfasser] des 2Clem nicht mit Gott identifiziert,' he does acknowledge the strength of the language of *2 Clement* 1.1: 'Der Vergleich οὕτως – ὡς ist soweit zugespitzt, daß er fast auf eine Identifikation hinausläuft: Jesus ist in seinem Handeln Gott; er ist der Richter über Lebende und Tote.'[8] Making a similar point that this text does not directly call Jesus 'God,' Pratscher nevertheless notes that the author does so more directly later in *2 Clement* 12.1 and 13.4.[9]

In the opening lines, the author placed Christ as the vital means of salvation: 'And it is necessary for us not to think little of our salvation, for when we think little of him, we will hope to

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[6] Andreas Lindemann, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, vol. 1, *Die Clemensbriefe*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. Hans Litzmann, Günter Bornkamm, and Andreas Lindemann, vol. 17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 201.

[7] See Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers 1*, 155. Vermes takes this as 'reminiscent of the phrase that Pliny the Younger quoted in his letter to the emperor Trajan' (*Christian Beginnings*, 165).

[8] Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 200. One must, however, keep in mind that a functional or agent christology does not necessarily rule out an ontological incarnational christology unless the agent christology explicitly claims to be exhaustive or exclusive.

[9] Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 66.

receive little. … And we are sinning, in not knowing from where we were called, and by whom and unto what place, and how much Jesus Christ endured suffering for us' (1.1–2). This may suggest that the sermon was originally delivered in a historical situation in which some neglected the person of Christ or downplayed his suffering. We can imagine that those who had taken the emphasis off of Christ or had portrayed him as something less than essential to the Christian life. In fact, the preacher urged, believers owed Christ everything for their salvation (1.3–8).

The point of the exhortation surfaced again in chapter 3. Because Christ had shown great mercy by revealing the Father of truth, Christians should not deny Christ through whom they had come to know God (*2 Clem.* 3.1). Jesus Christ was regarded as the only means of access to God and salvation (3.2). The author called on his readers to acknowledge Christ through obedience and a lifestyle that matched their confession (3.3). Like Ignatius's call for works that reflected one's inner conviction—that is, the love that flowed from faith—the preacher called on his hearers to acknowledge Christ 'in loving one another'—the love of Christ reflected in lifestyle and loving community life (4.3–5).

The author then urged his hearers to focus on the world to come rather than the present world, using a dialogue between Peter and Jesus found, perhaps, in the lost *Gospel of the Egyptians*, or based on a common oral tradition (*2 Clem.* 5.1–4).[10] Then he noted, 'And you know, brothers and sisters, that the sojourning in this world of this flesh is small and of brief duration, but the promise of Christ is great and wonderful—even the rest of the coming kingdom and eternal life' (5.5). On the surface, this sounds as though the author were disparaging fleshly existence, an attitude that would not be consistent with one who held to a full incarnational narrative in which the fleshly body of Christ was resurrected and immortalized in anticipation of the eschatological resurrection. However, this statement alone is rather neutral, and does not necessarily constitute a flesh-spirit dichotomy. The preacher did, however, suggest a strong contrast between the present world and the coming world: 'This age that is and the one coming are two

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[10] But see Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 213–14.

enemies' (6.3). Perhaps echoing the 'two ways' contrasts prevalent in other early Christian literature, the writer encouraged moral living in contrast with an immoral lifestyle. Clearly, the author required that good works followed baptism—a righteous lifestyle as the fruit of true conversion (6.5–9). Using the analogy of an earthly contest, he called his listeners to train hard and compete well (7.1–2), rather than fail in the contest and not keep the seal of baptism through perseverance in good works (7.6). In chapter 8, the writer urged that as long as they were in the world, they could repent (8.1–2). Yet after departing from the world, people could not repent or confess (8.3). He thus exhorted the listeners again to keep their flesh pure and the seal (of baptism) unstained, in order to receive life (8.6).[11]

In the next section the preacher dispelled all questions about whether he rejected and disparaged the flesh, leading into his section on incarnational christology:

> And let no one among you say that this flesh (αὕτη ἡ σάρξ) is not judged nor rises again. Understand: in what were you you saved, in what did you receive sight, if not while being in this flesh? Therefore, it is necessary for us to guard the flesh as a temple of God. For in such manner you were called in the flesh, so also you will come in the flesh. (*2 Clem.* 9.1–4).[12]

The author's point is that God values the flesh because he called them in the flesh and had made the flesh his temple. The preacher then evidenced this with christology: 'If Christ, the Lord who saved us, though existing at first as spirit (ὢν μὲν τὸ πρῶτον πνεῦμα),[13]

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[11] See Herm. *Sim.* 9.16.1–7.

[12] See the similar thought in Herm. *Sim.* 5.7.1: 'Keep this flesh of yours pure and undefiled, in order that the Spirit who dwells in it may bear witness for it, the your flesh may be deemed righteous.'

[13] The change in the eleventh century Hierosolymitanus from πνεῦμα to λόγος (found in codex Alexandrinus of the fifth century and the Syriac text) is probably an emendation to prevent a blurring of the persons of the Son and the Spirit. Only when πνεῦμα began to take on a consistently technical meaning as a reference to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, would a passage like *2 Clem.* 9.5 pose problems. In

became flesh (ἐγένετο σάρξ) and thus called us, so also we will receive the reward in this flesh' (9.5).

While obviously a key component of the incarnational narrative, this may also be an allusion to the specific incarnational language of John 1:14.[14] Gregory and Tuckett offer a more cautious appraisal: 'Whether this shows a literary link, or simply reflects common Christian terminology, is not so clear.' However, their negative conclusions seem too definitive for evidence that is basically inconclusive: 'It therefore seems very unlikely that *2 Clement* shows any knowledge of the gospel of John at all.'[15] Though a lack of familiarity with the gospel of John by the author of *2 Clement* would render this text an independent witness of early incarnational christology and therefore strengthen my thesis of a catholic Christianity united by a common incarnational narrative amidst a diversity of texts, traditions, and teachers, I cannot take the step of assuming what the unknown author of *2 Clement*—or its community—actually knew or did not know on the basis of arguments from silence or, in this case, whispers.[16]

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the second century, however, the use of πνεῦμα had a much more dynamic and less rigid usage, sometimes referring simply to the divine nature, or pre-incarnate state of Christ.

[14] Lindemann notes, 'Ob ἐγένετο σάρξ auf Joh 1,14 anspielt (s.o. zu Warns), mag man fragen …; weitere Bezüge zu Joh zeigen sich aber nicht, und so liegt die Vermutung näher, daß der Gedanke der Inkarnation, auch in dieser Formulierung, bereits traditionell geworden ist' (Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 227). However, Charles Hill sees this passage as a probable reference to the Johannine text of John 1:14 in particular (Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004]).

[15] Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett, '*2 Clement* and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,' in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 253.

[16] In reality, a literary dependence on Johannine incarnational christology by any of my witnesses to the incarnational narrative would actually serve to weaken rather than strengthen my arguments, because it could be argued that the writing simply parroted fixed traditional texts

In any case, the argument of *2 Clement* asserts that because Christ, at first spirit, became flesh, then believers will receive their reward in the flesh. To carry weight, the argument requires that both the author and the audience of *2 Clement* already held to a christological narrative in which the pre-incarnate Lord came into the world and became human with a body of flesh. And if the literary genre of *2 Clement* is really a homily, then this provides direct evidence that both the author and the audience shared a foundational incarnational christology, as the preacher would not need to assume or speculate about what his own audience believed as Christians and what would be rhetorically effective.

We must not only note the fact of the incarnational narrative, but also its function—the author appealed to the narrative to encourage love in the community of faith (*2 Clem* 9.6–11). Lindemann writes, 'Aus der Mahnung (9,1–3) und der Zusage (9,4.5) folgt als Konsequenz die Paränese (ἀγαπῶμεν οὖν): Die gegenseitige Liebe entspricht dem Tun des Willens Gottes.'[17] As we saw in other writings, the incarnational narrative in *2 Clement* served as the evidential foundation upon which practical exhortations rest. The author thus called his audience to a life characterized by repentance, reminding them of future judgment (*2 Clem.* 10.1–5).

The author further evinces a belief in the deity of Christ in *2 Clement* 12.1: 'Let us wait, therefore, each hour, for the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, because we do not know the day of the appearing of God (τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ θεοῦ).'[18] The clear allusions to the expectations of the sudden coming of Christ in passages like Mark 13:35, Matthew 24:42; 25:13; and Luke 12:40 render it most probable that the author has the second coming of Christ in mind when he employs the phrase τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ θεοῦ. This is further strengthened when we consider the frequent use of ἐπιφανεία for the second coming of Christ in New

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without actually incorporating the general dogmatic content as the basis of Christian identity.

[17] Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 227

[18] The Syriac translation has 'of him' rather than 'of God.' However, τοῦ θεοῦ is attested by both Alexandrinus and Hierosolymitanus.

Testament passages like 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8 (cf. *2 Clem.* 1.1); and especially Titus 2:13, which also calls Jesus 'God'—'We wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.' In light of these parallels in terms and imagery with the coming of Christ, there seems to be no reason to reject the view that the author of *2 Clement* regards the coming Lord Jesus as worthy of the title θεός.[19]

The teacher next evidenced the diversity of texts and traditions then current among those who shared a Christianity characterized by the incarnational narrative. In *2 Clement* 12.2 he quoted a source similar to *Gospel of Thomas* 22 and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*: 'When the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male nor female.'[20] Interestingly, the author interpreted the cryptic phrase eschatologically and in conformity with what appears to have been common catholic Christian teachings. Whether Jesus actually said this, or something like it, is not of major concern here, nor is it necessary for our purposes to identify the source from which the preacher received the saying.[21] It may be noted, however, that he interpreted the passage in conformity with a received tradition and remained close to other teachings among catholic writings.[22]

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[19] See Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 160. Tuckett, however, prefers to take this as a reference to an eschatological manifestation of God, not Christ—seemingly contrary to his own acknowledgement that the imagery (similar to the synoptic Olivet Discourse) points to the second coming of Christ and contrary to the fact that 'in the NT, the word ἐπιφανεία comes mostly from the Pastorals … and is always with reference to Christ' (Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 230).

[20] See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.13.92.

[21] Pratscher makes a good case that the saying in *2 Clem.* is independent of and earlier than the similar sayings in *Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of the Egyptians*, though he cautiously concludes, 'Ob sogar ein authentisches Jesuslogion im Hintergrund zu vermuten ist, muss angesichts der Ungesichertheit der ursprünglichen Fassung letztlich offen bleiben' (Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 163).

[22] Of particular note is the assertion that 'the outside like the inside'

The author then called his readers to 'repent right now' (*2 Clem.* 13.1), stresssing the importance of harmony between confession and good works without hypocrisy (13.2–4). Though the teacher used a diversity of texts and traditions, he interpreted these in conformity with catholic tradition. In 13.4, the author appears to attribute a saying of Jesus to θεός. Pratscher notes that this divine attribution for words spoken by Christ 'ist ungewöhnlich.'[23] However, given the author's already established high christology (*2 Clem.* 1.2; 12.1), it is not surprising that he regarded the words of Christ to be the words of God.

This then brings us to one of the more enigmatic phrases in the homily, *2 Clement* 14.4: 'But if we say 'the flesh' is the church and 'the spirit' is Christ, then the one who mistreats 'the flesh' mistreats the church. Therefore, such a person will not share in 'the spirit,' which is the Christ.' Though confusing on the surface, in light of the author's argument we see that the statement makes sense. My full translation of chapter 14 follows:

> 1. Therefore, brothers and sisters, by doing the will of our Father, God, we will be of the first church—the spiritual one that was created before the sun and moon. But if we do not do the will of the Lord, we will be of the Scripture which says, 'My house was made a hideout for robbers.' So then, let us choose to be from the living church, in order that we might be saved.

> 2. Now I do not suppose you to be ignorant that the living church is the body of Christ, for the Scripture says, 'God made man male and female.' The 'male' is Christ; the 'female' is the church. And furthermore the books [of the prophets] and the apostles say the church is not merely a present reality, but from the beginning. For it was spiritual, as was also our Jesus. But he

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refers to a harmony between the inner and outer, as we see in Ignatius as well (*2 Clem.* 12.4).

[23] Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 175.

became manifest at the end of days, in order that he might save us.[24]

3. Though being spiritual, the church became manifest in the flesh of Christ, revealing to us that if any among us keep watch over it in the flesh and do not corrupt it, he will receive it by the Holy Spirit. For this 'flesh' is the visible representative of the 'spirit.'[25] Therefore, no one who corrupts the visible representative will share in the actual thing represented. So then, brothers and sisters, it means this: keep watch over the flesh in order than you may share in the spirit.

4. But if we say 'the flesh' is the church and 'the spirit' is Christ, then the one who mistreats 'the flesh' mistreats the

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[24] It is unclear whether the subject of ἐπανερώθη and σώσῃ is Jesus or the church. Because of the established analogy, both would be true to the context, but I have concluded that Christ is intended here, because the next statement in 14.3 (ἡ ἐκκλησία δὲ πνευματικὴ οὖσα ἐφανερώθη) seems to return to the original subject, the church, and in the author's analogy, advances it from its spiritual pre-existence into the physical manifestation with the incarnation of Christ already mentioned at the end of 14.2.

[25] I have placed the terms 'flesh' and 'spirit' in *2 Clem.* 14.3–4 in quotation marks, suggesting that the author was treating the preceding statement as an authoritative conclusion to be further interpreted in his unfolding argument: δηλοῦσα ἡμῖν ὅτι ἐάν τις ἡμῶν τηρήσῃ αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ καὶ μὴ φθείρῃ, ἀπολήψεται αὐτὴν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ (see Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity*, 163). This phrase, the conclusion of the author's preceding argument, was then reworded at the end of verse 3 when it became the premise of his paraenesis: ἄρα οὖν τοῦτο λέγει, ἀδελφοί: τηρήσατε τὴν σάρκα ἵνα τοῦ πνεύματος μεταλάβητε (see Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 187). The introductory clause τοῦτο λέγει is often used to introduce a writer's interpretation of a text (*2 Clem.* 2.2, 5; 8.6; 12.4, 5; *Barn.* 5.4; 11.8–11; 15.4–5). In *2 Clem.* 14.3 the author introduced a practical exhortation based on the implications of the conclusion introduced by δηλοῦσα ἡμῖν ὅτι. It is this same authoritative statement, then, which the author proceeded to explain in *2 Clem.* 14.4 with the opening phrase, εἰ δὲ λέγομεν.

> church. Therefore, such a person will not share in 'the spirit,' which is the Christ. 5. This 'flesh' is able to share in such a great life and immortality when the Holy Spirit is united with it.

The idea in this passage is that although it was invisible and spiritual (in the plan and purpose of God or spiritually united to the pre-incarnate Son), the church was not something completely new, though it was something distinct and superior to the old. So, the union between the church and Christ was also related to the spiritual character of Christ prior to the incarnation, at which time the church itself became 'incarnate' in some sense. Therefore, what the author said about the church can also be said about Christ. He wrote, 'Though being spiritual, the church became manifest in the flesh of Christ, revealing to us that if any among us keep watch over it in the flesh and do not corrupt it, he will receive it by the Holy Spirit' (*2 Clem.* 14.3). Taking the argument as a whole, this seems to mean that by protecting the physical church community and guarding themselves by righteous living free from hypocrisy, they would receive spiritual blessings. In short, there should be no dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical.

He went on to explain: 'For this "flesh" is the visible representative of the "spirit." Therefore, no one who corrupts the visible representative will share in the actual thing represented.' (14.3). This reinforces our understanding of this passage. The physical manifestation of the church corresponds to and is an exact representation of the original spiritual reality unseen and hidden in Christ before the foundation of the world. Thus, one cannot be a member of the spiritual body without being a member of the physical body. The two are inseparable.

In light of the author's pattern of quoting passages then interpreting them typologically, a proper understanding of the difficult phrase in *2 Clement* 14.4 becomes clear: 'But if we say "the flesh" is the church and "the spirit" is Christ, then the one who mistreats "the flesh" mistreats the church. Therefore, such a person will not share in "the spirit," which is the Christ' (14.3–4). This has caused problems for interpreters because they sometimes

fail to see 14.4 as a typological interpretation of the conclusion introduced by δηλοῦσα ἡμῖν ὅτι in *2 Clement* 14:3.[26] The author was in no way identifying the Holy Spirit with Christ in an ontological or theological sense,[27] but in a typological sense. As such, Christ is the antitype of the 'spirit' of the previous phrase (14.3), and the church is the antitype of the 'flesh' in the same phrase. So, the practical application of the command is: 'Guard the church, in order that you may receive Christ,' which reinforces the author's assertion that one may not have Christ apart from the church.

The preacher returned to exhorting self-control (*2 Clem.* 15), then called his audience again to repentance and good works before their life ended by either death or by the return of Christ (16.1–4). After calling them to follow the presbyters and to gather together (17.3), the preacher exhorted them to live in light of Christ's return (17.4–7). The preacher himself was an example for his congregation of one who was 'utterly sinful,' but pursuing righteousness, fearing the coming judgment (18.1–2). After several more practical exhortations in light of an eschatological hope (19–20), the preacher ended with a christologicaly rich doxology: 'To the only God, invisible, the Father of truth, who sent forth to us the Savior and Founder of immortality, through whom he also

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[26] Grant illustrates this interpretational problem: 'The subsequent notions about the flesh being the Church and the Spirit being Christ (14:4) simply compound confusion' (Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, ed. Robert M. Grant [New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964], 121). Bart Ehrman rightly identifies this as a quotation, though he notes that the source is 'unknown' (Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers 1*, 189). See also G. Krüger, 'Zu II. Klem. 14, 2,' *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 31 (1932): 204–05.

[27] Pratscher notes, 'Eine differenzierte christologische Aussage ist kaum das Ziel des Verfassers' (Pratscher, *Der zweite Clemensbrief*, 188). And Tuckett rightly warns, 'The topic under discussion is *not* an abstract treatise on Christology! Hence it would be quite wrong to try to draw conclusions about the writer's Trinitarian (or otherwise) "theology", or his Christology' (Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 258).

revealed to us the truth and the heavenly life, to him be the glory forever and ever' (20.5).

In sum, *2 Clement* presents the deity and pre-incarnate existence of the Son (1.1; 9.5; 12.1; 13.4; 14.2) as well as his incarnational union with fleshly humanity (9.5; 14.2, 3). The true suffering and death of the Son is the basis of salvation (1.2), and the fleshly resurrection is regarded as the pattern and promise of the resurrection of Christians (9.1–4). Finally, the heavenly assumption of the Son is assumed in the passages of praise, as well as the expectation of his return (1.1; 17.4–7; 20.5). The author also appealed to these assertions as foundational to its exhortations, implying a stable christological awareness shared by the community to which the homily was addressed.

Figure 28: Elements of the incarnational narrative in
2 Clement

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*2 Clem.* 1.1; 9.5; 12.1; 13.4; 14.2
2) Incarnational union	*2 Clem.* 9.5; 14.2, 3
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*2 Clem.* 1.2
5) Bodily resurrection	*2 Clem.* 9.1–4
6) Heavenly assumption	*2 Clem.* 1.1; 17.4–7; 20.5

EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

The authorship, date, and provenance of *Barnabas* are difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty.[28] At the start one must rule out any possibility of positively identifying the 'teacher'

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[28] For a helpful survey on the critical issues involved, see Leslie W. Barnard, 'The "Epistle of Barnabas" and Its Contemporary Setting,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Part II, Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase, vol. 27, 1, *Religion (Vorkonstantinische Christentum: Apostolischen Väter und Apologeten)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 172–80.

(διδάσκαλος, see *Barn.* 1.8; 4.9), as it is fairly certain that the ascription in the title was a later addition and that the author was not, after all, the apostle Barnabas.[29] The preponderance of scholars regard an origin or destination of Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, or Rome as unlikely, and Syria or Antioch is regarded as possible, but not probable. As a result of my own work in *Barnabas*, I have tentatively concluded that the book was probably written within a late first or early second century Egyptian or Palestinian milieu.[30] *Barnabas* 1.3 wrote, 'Thus the longed for sight of you overwhelmed me,' suggesting that the letter was written from some distance or under some circumstances that made a personal visit difficult. If the letter was associated in some way with Alexandria,[31]

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[29] James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe, vol. 64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 3–7. Even this confident negative assertion, however, goes beyond the limits of the evidence.

[30] See discussion on the origin of *Barabas* in Ferdinand-Rupert Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief*, Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern, ed. Norbert Brox, G. Kretschmar, and Kurt Niederwimmer, vol. 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 119–30. The issues are complex and the evidence 'does not justify dogmatic statements about the origin and background of the epistle' (Robert A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 3, *Barnabas and the Didache*, ed. Robert M. Grant [Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson, 1965], 54).

[31] This is the general scholarly consensus (Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 271–72; Janni Loman, 'The *Letter of Barnabas* in Early Second-Century Egypt,' in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuizen* ed. Anthony Hilhorst and George H. van Kooten, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, vol. 59 [Leiden: Brill, 2005]). However, Lindemann and Paulsen state, 'Als Entstehungsort kommen Ägypten, Syrien, Kleinasien, aber auch Griechenland in Frage, ohne daß eine sichere Entscheidung möglich ist' (Franz Xaver Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Griechisch-deutsche Parallelausgabe* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992], 24). Prigent suggests the document arose in Syria (Pierre Prigent, *Les Testimonia dans le christianisme primitif: L'épître de Barnabé I–XVI et ses sources*, Études bibliques [Paris: Gabalda, 1961] and Wengst suggests Asia Minor (Klaus Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie des Barnabasbriefes*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, vol. 42 [Berlin: De

we can assume that it was either written from Alexandria to a
group elsewhere in Egypt, or written to a group in a nearby region
such as Palestine, or even from Palestine to Alexandria.[32] Though
he denied the title 'teacher' (1.8; 4.9), the author functioned in this
capacity, suggesting at least an informal authority from the
perspective of the remote Christian community.[33]

As far as the date is concerned, we know that something had
occurred in the author's recent memory that he believed had
fulfilled prophetic Scripture, for in *Barnabas* 1.7 he wrote, 'For the
Master has made known to us through the prophets things that
have passed and things that are present, and he has given to us a
first taste of things about to come. Seeing the working out of these
things individually, just as he said, we ought to bring a rich and
high [offering] in reverence for him.' In 2.6 we see that God had
abolished the sacrifices, suggesting that the temple had been
destroyed. Lindemann and Paulsen suggest that reference is made
to the construction of a new temple to Jupiter, which occurred
around 130 CE (16.3–4). Yet at the same time, they note that no
mention is made of the Bar Kochba revolt, between 132 and 135,
so, they conclude, the epistle can be dated quite precisely between

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Gruyter, 1971], 113–18).

[32] Barnard favors the view that the book was probably written from
Alexandria to a group of Jewish Christians somewhere in Middle Egypt
between about 117 and 132 CE (Leslie W. Barnard, 'The Problem of the
Epistle of Barnabas,' *Church Quarterly Review* 159 [1958]: 212). Though I
lean toward an Alexandrian origin for this letter, I think the plausibility of
a Palestinian destination in the late first century may have been
overlooked in scholarship. It certainly would help explain the letter's
concern over the first (or, perhaps, the second) Jewish revolt and the
destruction (or reconstruction) of the temple in Jerusalem. Though by no
means conclusive, the way the author refers to Syrians, Arabs, and
Egyptians may suggest that he wrote to or from Judea or Samaria, situated
in the midst of these surrounding nations (*Barn.* 9.6).

[33] See *Did.* 13.1–2; 15.1–2. The teacher appears to be among the
second generation Christians because he refers to the twelve apostles as
past, but having preached to his own generation (*Barn.* 8.3).

AD 130 and 132.[34] However, I am not convinced that the author of this letter would have regarded a Roman temple dedicated to Jupiter as an attempt to rebuild the temple of the old covenant. In any case, many scholars appear to find the median date of about 100 most satisfying, and for the purpsoes of placing a christological understanding in its general historical context, precise dating is not necessary.[35]

A major purpose of the letter was to show the true Christian interpretation and application of the Old Testament law in light of the Christ event and current events, demonstrating that God has always been interested in moral application rather than external ritual. Thus, *Barnabas* was likely an early Jewish Christian work written at a time after the destruction of the temple in an attempt to explain how the Old Testament remained relevant even after its sacrifices were incapable of being performed.

In the opening of the letter the author determined, as a means of encouragement, to share with his readers 'three doctrines of the Lord'—hope of life, righteousness, and love shown in gladness and rejoicing (*Barn.* 1.6). He revealed his intention in 1.8: 'But I, not as a teacher but as one of you, will point out a few things by which in these present matters you may be cheered up.'

The author then exhorted his readers—in light of the current evil days—to seek righteousness, faith, fear, patience, endurance, self-control, wisdom, understanding, insight, and knowledge (2.1–3). The context appears to be the recent loss of temple worship, as the author tried to turn their attention away from the sacrificial system to a more spiritual application of its mandates: 'Therefore he has nullified these things in order that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, being without a yoke of necessity, may have the offering not made by man' (2.6). The new law—which replaced the old sacrificial system—was thus centered on Christ.

After a brief eschatological section exhorting his readers to be faithful in the last days (4.1–14), the author turned to a major

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[34] Funk et al., eds, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 24.

[35] See Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 34. For a detailed discussion of the relevant internal evidence, see Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 111–19.

component of the incarnational narrative in his continued appeal for faithfulness: 'For this reason (εἰς τοῦτο γάρ) the Lord endured the handing over of his flesh to destruction (παραδοῦναι τὴν σάρκα εἰς καταφθοράν), in order that the we may be purified by the forgiveness of sins, which is by his sprinkled blood' (5.1). He referred to Isaiah 53:5, 7 as referring somewhat to Israel and somewhat to Christians (5.2) but applied the promises of forgiveness and salvation through Christ to both. He exhorted his readers to not be led astray after receiving the knowledge of the truth (5.4), then appealed to the person of Christ to further strengthen his exhortation:

> Yet also this, my brothers and sisters: if the Lord submitted to suffer for our souls, being Lord of the whole world (ὢν παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου κύριος), to whom God said from the foundation of the world, 'Let us make humanity according to our image and likeness,' how, then, did he submit to suffer by the hand of humans? Learn. The prophets, receiving grace from him, prophesied concerning him. But he submitted in order to nullify death and to demonstrate the resurrection from the dead, endured, because it was necessary for him to be manifested in flesh. (*Barn.* 5.5–6)[36]

The final line, ὅτι ἐν σαρκὶ ἔδει αὐτὸν φανερωθῆναι, suggests that the purpose for the coming of the Lord in the flesh was to suffer, die, and rise again. It is also clear that this is a decisively incarnational narrative: the preincarnate Son of God (5.5; compare 6.12) was manifested in the flesh (σάρξ) in order to die and rise again, defeating death and proving the resurrection.[37] But what was

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[36] Prostmeier writes, 'Auf der Parenthese (ὢν bis ἡμετέραν) liegt das theologische Gewicht des Verses' (Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 241–42).

[37] See A. T. Hanson, 'The Activity of the Pre-existent Christ as Reflected in the Epistle of Barnabas,' *Studia patristica* 21, no. 3 (1989): 156. On this passage Prostmeier writes, 'Hatte V 5 die Gottheit des κύριος festgestellt, indem seine Präexistenz aus der Schrift erwiesen wurde, so stellt V 6 fest, daß sie von Inkarnation und Leiden nicht tangiert ist. Subordinationistische und adoptianistische Christologien finden in diesem Entwurf keinen Anhalt' (Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 244).

the status of this narrative first within his own theology and discourse, and then within the world of his audience?

In *Barnabas*, the incarnational narrative was central to his soteriology as the account of the Son's suffering and payment for sin (5.1–2).[38] A knowledge of this 'way of righteousness,' then, became a point of decision—those who knew and rejected it would come under judgment (5.4). But for the author, the incarnation was not only expiatory, but also revelatory: 'For if he did not come in the flesh (ἦλθεν ἐν σαρκί), in no way could people me saved by seeing him' (5.10). Yet this revelation was also tied to the putting away of sins and the salvation that came through his flesh:

> The Son of God came in the flesh (ἐν σαρκὶ ἦλθεν) for this reason, that he might sum up the completion of the sins of those who persecuted his prophets unto death. So for this reason he endured. For God says the blow of his flesh was because of them: 'When they strike their own shepherd, then the sheep of the flock will be destroyed.' But he wanted to suffer thus, for it was necessary that he would suffer on a tree. (5.11–13)

On the heals of the author's appeal to a number of Old Testament Scriptures to show the necessary and preordained suffering of the Messiah (6.7), he succinctly stated the purpose of discussing and reinforcing his incarnational narrative:

> The good Lord revealed everything to us before hand, in order that we might know whom we ought to praise in the giving of thanks for all things. Therefore, if the Son of God, being Lord and about to judge the living and the dead, suffered in order

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[38] Paget notes, '*Barnabas* pays particular attention to Christ's passion and death, showing how, in a variety of ways, they fulfil the scriptures. … Christ, the central point of scriptural reference (12.5, 9), through his death brings about the creation of a new covenant in which Christians' hearts are redeemed from darkness, and which, by extension, enables the Christian to understand the meaning of the covenantal commands' (James Carleton Paget, 'The *Epistle of Barnabas*,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster [London: T. & T. Clark, 2007], 79–80).

that his wound might make us alive, let us believe that the son
of God was not able to suffer except for us. (7.1–2)

The message of the forgiveness of sins by means of the death and
resurrection of Christ was linked with the message preached by the
twelve apostles (8.3). Here we see an intentional diachronic self-
identification with the apostolic message, which the author
summarized in the form of an explicitly incarnational narrative.

Then, through a typological discussion of circumcision, the
author expounded on how the commands pointed forward to Jesus
and the soteriological narrative (*Barn.* 9), centered on Jesus and his
suffering (9.8). He went on to reinterpret spiritually and morally the
various dietary laws (10.1–12), which he regarded as teaching how
believers were to live morally before the Lord in the present age.
He also found various Old Testament types of baptism and the
cross (11.1–7), two themes that carefully associated in the author's
mind (11.8). In chapter 12, the author mined additional Old
Testament passages for references to the cross, including Moses
lifting his hands to conquer the enemies of Israel as well as raising
the serpent in the wilderness (12.1–7). The author summarized the
point of his interpretations: 'You have again in these things the
glory of Jesus, because all things are by him and unto him (ὅτι ἐν
αὐτῷ πάντα καὶ εἰς αὐτόν)' (12.7). This last ὅτι clause reveals the
hermeneutical presupposition of the author. He sought and found
references to Jesus and the cross because he believed that all things
(including Old Testament narratives) were to lead to him.[39] When
referring to the narrative of Joshua son of Nun, the author
concluded, 'Behold again Jesus—not son of man but son of God,
and revealed in the flesh by a type' (12.10).[40] The author also

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[39] This hermeneutic is similar to what we already encountered in
Ignatius of Antioch. See comments on Ignatius's christological
hermeneutic in chapter 7 above, pp. 139–141.

[40] Hanson writes, 'There seems also to be a good reason to conclude
that the author of Barnabas saw in the figure of Joshua not only a type of
Jesus but also in some sense an appearance of the pre-existent Christ'
(Hanson, 'The Activity of the Pre-existent Christ as Reflected in the
Epistle of Barnabas,' 156). However, taking this passage as a creative

affirmed a high christology, citing Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1) (12.11).

The next question the author sought to answer was whether the former people (Israel) or 'this people' (the Christians) were the heirs of the covenant. The author saw in Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh a type of the blessing of the Church over Israel (*Barn.* 13.1–6). He went on to show how the nation of Israel, because of their sins, were not worthy to receive Moses's covenant at Sinai (14.1–4). The author then described how the Christians received the covenant from God instead, appealing to a high christology:

> The Lord himself gave to us, unto a people of inheritance, by suffering for us. And he was made known in order that manifest also in order they might bring to completion the sins and we might receive the covenant through the Lord Jesus who inherited, who for this reason was made ready, that by appearing himself he might enact a covenant with us by [his] word (διάθηται ἐν ἡμῖν διαθήκην λόγῳ), having bought back from darkness our hearts that had already been sold off to death and given over to the lawlessness of error. For it is written how the Father commands him to prepare for himself a holy people by buying us back from the darkness. (14.4–6)

The author also interpreted the Sabbath in eschatological terms (15.4–5), then revealed that their communities celebrated the eighth day (Sunday) to commemorate the resurrection and ascension—

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typology or allegorical interpretation is more in keeping with Barnabas's general approach to Old Testament scripture, and this also seems to fit an approach to biblical interpretation common during this period (see, e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2d edn [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999]; A. P. O'Hagen, 'Early Christian Exegesis Exemplified from the Epistle of Barnabas,' *Australian Biblical Review* [1963]: 33–40). Nevertheless, Hanson's general assertion that *Barn.* presents a christology of a pre-incarnate Son similar to that found in Paul, Hebrews, and the fourth Gospel, still stands without literalizing the author's allegories.

key components of the incarnational narrative (15.9).[41] The context makes it clear that Sunday worship was the normal practice.

To conclude, *Barnabas* explicitly asserts an incarnational narrative.[42] The pre-incarnate existence of the Son is expressed in no uncertain terms (*Barn.* 5.5; 6.12; 12.11). The incarnational union of the Son with fleshly humanity is also clearly seen as the means by which the Son could die and rise again for the forgiveness of sins (5.5–6, 10–11; 11.10; 14.4–5). The true suffering and death of the incarnate Son is seen as the purpose for his incarnation (5.1, 5–6, 12–13; 9.8), and the true fleshly bodily resurrection of the incarnate Son is mentioned in 5.6 and 15.9, closely associated with his death and incarnation. Christ's heavenly assumption is implied by the designation of Christ as the Lord and Judge of the living and the dead (7.1–2; 15.9). This incarnational narrative formed the background for the author's christological hermeneutic, as he uncovered support for this narrative in the Old Testament Scriptures (*Barn.* 12).

Figure 29: Elements of the incarnational narrative in
Barnabas

Narrative Element	Passages
1) Pre-incarnate existence	*Barn.* 5.5; 6.12; 12.11
2) Incarnational union	*Barn.* 5.5–6, 10–11; 11.10; 14.4–5
3) Birth and life	
4) Suffering and death	*Barn.* 5.1, 5–6, 12–13; 9.8
5) Bodily resurrection	*Barn.* 5.6; 15.9
6) Heavenly assumption	*Barn.* 7.1–2; 15.9

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[41] Ignatius made a similar argument concerning Sunday worship (Ign. *Magn.* 9). See discussion above, pp. 102–104.

[42] See comments in Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 152–54.

The Incarnational Narrative in *Second Clement* and *Barnabas*

Though their respective dates and regions of origin are uncertain, *2 Clement* and *Barnabas* both corroborate the thesis that the incarnational narrative was geographically widespread in the early second century. The testimony of *Barnabas* probably comes from Egypt or Palestine in the late first or early second century. It is an inter-community correspondence, which suggests at least two groups that shared a common understanding of the Christian faith. And the incarnational passion and resurrection are central to the paraenesis and hermeneutic of *Barnabas*.

If *2 Clement* represents an Alexandrian community of the first half of the second century, it could be grouped with *Barnabas*, thus strengthening a more complete picture of the state of incarnational christology in early catholic Christianity. Yet the questions of date and provenance are too ambiguous to place the weight of certainty on its testimony. However, because of the clarity of the incarnational narrative in this homily, one can at least use *2 Clement* to extend the evidence outward from Antioch and Asia Minor, as these regions are not usually regarded as serious contenders for its place of origin.

Figure 30: Discernible references to the six movements of the incarnational narrative in *2 Clement* and *Barnabas*

Writing	1 Pre-incarnate existence	2 Incarnational union	3 Birth and life	4 Suffering and death	5 Bodily resurrection	6 Heavenly assumption
2 Clem.	+	+		+	+	+
Barn.	+	+		+	+	+

CHAPTER 15. THE CATHOLICITY OF THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE

From Antioch to Asia Minor, from Macedonia and Achaia to Rome, and perhaps in Palestine and Egypt, an incarnational narrative similar to that of Ignatius of Antioch enjoyed broad representation by the early second century. Thus, among catholic Christians, faithfulness to the incarnational narrative was early (by about 200 CE), widespread (throughout the Greco-Roman world), and foundational (explicitly or implicitly relied upon for theology and paraenesis). This catholic incarnational narrative served both as a vital unifying mark of catholic Christian identity even amidst great diversity, and also as a distinguishing mark between catholic and non-catholic Christians.

REGIONAL TESTIMONIES

In the vicinity of Syrian Antioch, we have the clear and explicit evidence of Ignatius of Antioch from about 110 CE. His testimony is corroborated by similar (though less complete and explicit) incarnational language and imagery in *Didache*, *Gospel of Peter*, and possibly *Odes of Solomon*. It must be granted that the evidence for Syrian Christianity apart from the clear Antiochene witness of Ignatius remains suggestive rather than decisive. In such cases one must ask whether the text could plausibly be read apart from the background of the incarnational narrative. This question can be approached in two stages. First, does the text explicitly reject aspects of the incarnational narrative? This question must be answered in the negative. Nothing in *Didache* explicitly rejects the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Though such negative evidence may seem like an argument from silence, when one considers the background of christological diversity in the

closing chapters, the apparent neutrality of *Didache* is more impressive.

Second, is it possible that some other christological narrative could have prevailed in the community behind this text? This question is much more difficult to answer with confidence. It is, in fact, conceivable that *Didache* could have reflected a community with a weak or incomplete incarnational narrative (though this assertion, too, would go beyond the actual evidence). All one can say is that *Didache* was accepted by later orthodox church fathers as compatible with the catholic tradition, a point which simply demonstrates that the text was capable of being read in light of an incarnational narrative. One might, therefore, place *Didache* in the same category as the New Testament writings such as the Gospel of Mark and James, books which neither contradict an incarnational christological narrative nor plainly and emphatically declare it.

The testimony of the *Gospel of Peter* is of a different quality than *Didache*, but similarly problematic. Though it is possible that the *Gospel of Peter* was uniquely utilized by docetists in Syria in the early second century, the actual ambiguity in the text itself does not necessarily mean that the original intent of the writing was docetic. Even according to early heresiologists, Antioch and Syria were, in fact, battle grounds for competing christologies in the late first and early second centuries, so the use of a text like the *Gospel of Peter* in certain communities should be expected. However, the testimony of Ignatius himself in chapters 4–8 of this book must also be regarded as primary evidence for the presence of the incarnational narrative in Antioch in the early second century. Based on this evidence, however, one gets the impression that the incarnational christology of Ignatius may have been under some pressure from competing christological narratives.

Besides providing direct testimony for the presence of the incarnational narrative in Antioch, Ignatius's correspondences also provided indirect evidence for the same christological understanding in Asia Minor and Rome. In Asia Minor itself, direct testimony comes from Polycarp of Smyrna, who in his letter (or letters) to the Philippians we see that Ignatius's assumption about the Smyrnaean bishop's theology was accurate. Polycarp not only collected and endorsed Ignatius's writings, but copied and transmitted them to the church in Philippi of Macedonia, thus

providing indirect evidence that by the early second century the Philippian church also shared Polycarp's and Ignatius's concept of catholic Christianity branded by the incarnational narrative. In *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, we have later evidence of Smyrna's incarnational trajectory and an insight into the legacy of Polycarp's own promotion of his view of catholic Christianity. The *Epistula Apostulorum*—if it belongs to Asia Minor—also contains important christological testimony, though it should be classified as secondary corroborative evidence. Similarly, the Roman official, Pliny, reveals that the Christians in his district of Pontus were uniquely identified by a high christology, eucharistic worship, and martyrdom that would have been consistent with a catholic incarnational narrative.

In Macedonia and Achaia, the testimony is both direct and indirect—both lines pointing in the same direction. Aristides provides important and clear evidence for a catholic Christian identity centered explicitly on key components of the incarnational narrative. The testimony from Aristides, therefore, presents a strong case for the centrality of the incarnational narrative among catholic Christians in Achaia. Besides this, *1 Clement* provides indirect but important evidence of the incarnational christology held in common by the regions of Rome and Achaia. Finally, because Philippi in Macedonia welcomed Ignatius and then requested his writings from Polycarp, we may reasonably conclude that the catholic Christians in that region were proponents of Ignatius's and Polycarp's incarnational christology by the early second century.

The direct testimony from Rome comes from *1 Clement* and *Shepherd of Hermas*, both of which reveal early expressions of the incarnational narrative. Though the christology of the latter writing has been variously interpreted by commentators, I have argued that its puzzling language may be reasonably read in conformity with an incarnational christological understanding. Additional corroborative evidence for the affinity for the incarnational christology in Rome is provided by the relationship between Polycarp and Anicetus in the middle of the second century as well as the Roman church's apparent reception, preservation, and reproduction of their letter from Ignatius, evidenced by Irenaeus's late second century appeal to the writing.

For the possible regions of Egypt or Palestine, *2 Clement* and *Barnabas* both evidence a christological understanding in

conformity with the incarnational pattern developed throughout the northern Mediterranean world. Though the date and provenance of these writings cannot be discerned with precision, their testimonies still advance the thesis of this book.

The great differences in genres, sources, arguments, styles, and structures exhibited by these writings suggest that early catholic Christianity had a high tolerance for a diversity of texts, teachers, and traditions so long as these were united on a shared incarnational narrative. We see a concrete example of this in the later second century testimony of Serapion of Antioch's attitude toward the *Gospel of Peter*, which he had been willing to allow if it conformed to the true doctrine of Christ (Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.4). The same case could perhaps be made about *Didache* and *Odes of Solomon*, as both of these texts were sometimes regarded as at least compatible with an orthodox incarnational christology.

When one compares the testimony of catholic writings from the late first and early second centuries, one sees a strong representation of a distinctly incarnational narrative (see below, Figure 31). And even when individual texts are missing specific movements included in other catholic writings, they do not contradict these elements of the narrative. In some cases, like *Didache*, it is not possible to discern whether the teacher or community behind the text would have affirmed the tenet of the narrative had it been explicitly addressed. Nevertheless, the testimony is overwhelmingly in support of a christological narrative of the incarnational union, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.

Figure 31: Discernible references to the six movements of the incarnational narrative as represented in the catholic writings of the late first and early second centuries.

Writing	1 Pre-incarnate existence	2 Incarnational union	3 Birth and life	4 Suffering and death	5 Bodily resurrection	6 Heavenly assumption
Ign.	+	+	+	+	+	+
Did.			+	+	+	+
Gos. Pet.		+		+	+	
Odes	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pol. *Phil.*	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mart. Pol.	+	+		+	+	+
Ep. Apost.	+	+	+	+	+	+
1 Clem.	+	+	+	+	+	+
Aristides	+	+	+	+	+	+
Shepherd	+	+		+	+	+
2 Clem.	+	+		+	+	+
Barn.	+	+		+	+	+

REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Based on the pattern of christological unity amidst diversity of texts, teachers, and traditions, I have hypothesized that Christians late in the first century and early in the second had already established a clear and conscious identity centered on the incarnational narrative of the person and work of Christ. This identity also formed the basis for a catholic Christian consciousness—a meta-community of like-minded Christians marked by the same christological confession (see below, Figure 32). If this hypothesis is correct, then those writings, teachers, and communities that did not conform to the incarnational narrative would have been regarded as outside the bounds of catholic

identity. It is to this implication of the thesis that I turn in the next chapter: non-incarnational christological narratives in the second century.

Figure 32: Map of the Mediterranean world indicating the primary (bold, italicized, and underlined) and secondary (italicized) testimonies of the incarnational narrative and inter-community relationships among catholic Christians of the late first and early second centuries CE
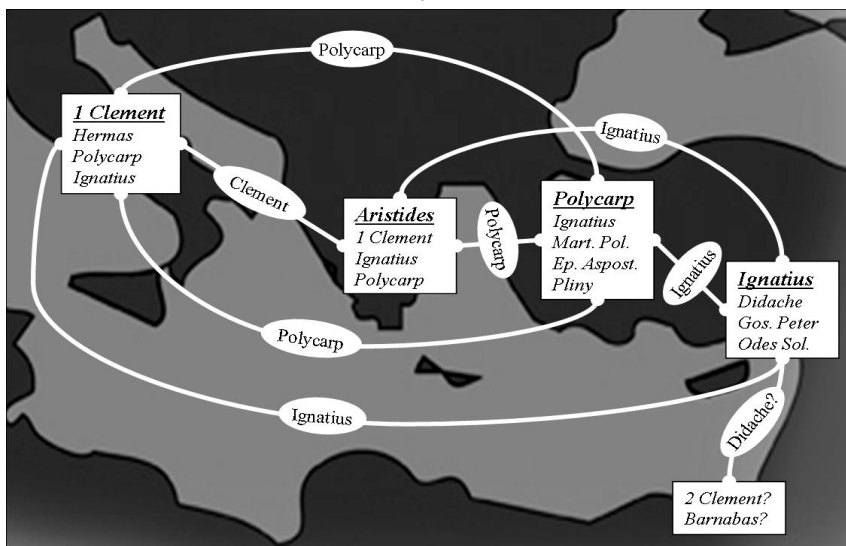
As depicted in the chart above, Ignatius of Antioch presents us with clear and complete primary evidence of the presence and strength of the incarnational narrative for the region of Syria. *Didache*, *Gospel of Peter*, and *Odes of Solomon* provide corroborating evidence. Moving westward, Polycarp of Smyrna becomes our primary early source of the incarnational narrative, both through his direct statements as well as by virtue of his strong reception and endorsement of Ignatius's theology and thought. Ignatius's relationship with Polycarp and the Asia Minor communities thus places his testimony as corroborative, along with *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Epistula Apostolorum*, and the indirect but interesting statement from Pliny.

Regarding the region of Achaia and Macedonia, Aristides of Athens's *Apology* provides the contours of an incarnational

narrative used explicitly to define Christianity and contrast it with other groups. Besides the testimony of Aristides, Polycarp's and Ignatius's relationships with Philippi indicate the unchallenged reception of Ignatius's incarnational narrative. Also, *1 Clement*, sent from Rome to Corinth, provides corroborating evidence for the reception of the incarnational narrative in Achaia.

Moving farther westward to Rome, *1 Clement* becomes the primary direct source of testimony regarding the strength of the incarnational narrative, written on behalf of the church in Rome and reflecting central elements of an incarnational narrative. The *Shepherd* corroborates this testimony, as do the receptions of Polycarp and Ignatius. The latter bishops' relationships with Rome suggest a network of catholic Christianity linking Rome with Achaia, Asia Minor, and Syria.

Finally, the possible connection between the community of the *Didache* with *Barnabas* through traditional Jewish Christian 'Two Ways' thought may establish a link between Antioch and Palestine or Egypt. This relationship is tenuous, however, and rests on an identification of the provenance of *Didache* and *Barnabas* in Syria and Egypt respectively. If *2 Clement* originates in Egypt, then this region, too, lends its voice to an early incarnational christological confession.

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

Based on the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, I argued that a distinct catholic Christian identity centered on a distinct incarnational narrative prevailed by the early years of the second century. From Ignatius's writings alone, I hypothesized that this sense of catholic Christian unity founded on faithfulness to the incarnational narrative was widespread, with representative communities thriving at least in Antioch, western Asia Minor, and Rome.

I next examined the available evidence of writings from the same generation of Christians contemporary with Ignatius, demonstrating that the regions of Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, Rome, and possibly Palestine and Egypt, provide testimony for the presence and potency of the incarnational narrative as a central mark of catholicity. Though a stable canon, formulaic creed, and clear episcopacy were in the formative stages in the early second century and would, in the course of the second century,

develop into powerful identity markers, these three structures appear to have developed as means of strengthening and defending an earlier incarnational catholic identity. They were not originally consciously regarded as constituting catholic identity itself. Catholic writers also employed an 'incarnational hermeneutic' to earlier texts and traditions, demonstrating that the incarnational narrative was the presupposed understanding rather than simply the product of reflection or exegesis.

In sum, by analyzing the christological continuity among Christian writings throughout the Graceo-Roman world and by discerning the role of the incarnational narrative in each document's overall argument and theology, I have shown that the early second century meta-community of 'catholic' Christianity was united on a basic incarnational christological narrative. Rudimentary structures, confessions, literature, and liturgy continued to develop into standard forms in later centuries, eventually becoming the external marks of catholic Christianity itself, but in the early second century they served the purpose of preserving and passing on the christological narrative.

In light of this reality of the early, widespread, and foundational incarnational narrative and its role in catholic Christian identity, I offer an alternative perspective on the question of early Christian self-identity. I suggest that early catholic Christians identified themselves with reference to faithfulness to the incarnational christological narrative and therefore identified themselves with other like-minded Christians. This identification necessarily put them in confessional conflict with non-incarnational christologies and thus non-catholic Christian communities.

Figure 33: Proposed model of the development of catholic Christian identity
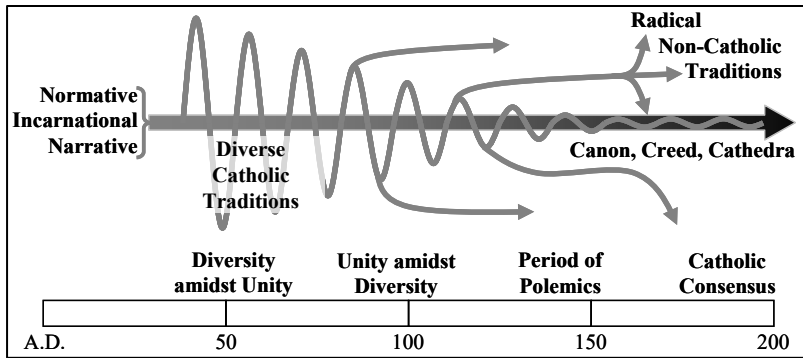
It remains to be shown in the final chapters of this book that these non-catholic communities did, in fact, markedly differ from catholic Christians on the particular points of the incarnational christological narrative. That is, if diverse groups of catholic Christians—such as the communities of Ignatius, Clement, and Barnabas—identified themselves as part of a united meta-community through faithfulness to the confession of an incarnational narrative, then non-catholic communities would have distinguished themselves from catholic Christians by christological narratives that revised or rejected elements of the incarnational narrative. While the burden of evidence for catholic documents required that a particular text did not deviate from an incarnational narrative, other texts would fail to measure up to the burden of evidence if they explicitly departed from the incarnational narrative at even one point. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, this is the very tendency evidenced by the non-catholic witnesses, thus confirming the thesis that the incarnational narrative served as the center and the source of early catholic Christianity.

CHAPTER 16. NON-INCARNATIONAL CHRISTOLOGIES AND NON-CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITIES

Robert Wilken writes, 'Gnosticism in its Christian form, and in spite of many of its bizarre teachings, must be seen not primarily as an aberrant deviation from an original apostolic norm, but a different form of Christian piety and belief emerging out of the primitive Christian tradition.'[1] The reluctance to call Christian gnosticism an 'abberant deviation' or especially 'unorthodox' is understandable given the tendency among scholars to regard the rise of normative catholic Christianity itself as a late second century development partially in response to sectarian challenges and characterized by the emerging norms of a stabilizing canon, creedal rule of faith, and powerful episcopacy. In light of this perspective, Rudolph writes in his classic introduction to gnosticism,

> It is … not surprising if there is between gnostic and Christian Christology no such deep gulf as has been repeatedly asserted—especially in more recent theological research. … That he has come 'in the flesh' means only this, that he has entered into the earthly and human sphere, just as Gnosis also assumes with regard to the redeemer. But the 'fleshly Christ' is not the true one, it is the non-fleshly, the Christ of glory, the Logos. … A separation in 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' is inappropriate for the first two centuries.[2]

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[1] Robert L. Wilken, 'Diversity and Unity in Early Christianity,' *Second Century* 1 (1981): 104.

[2] Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. P.

Yet Rudolph's contention, rooted in Harnack's characterization of the historical situation, does not stand under the actual documentary and historical evidence. One must remember that Harnack's concept of doctrinal development, set in terms of the Hellenization of Palestinian Christianity, moves from a low to a high christology, from the human Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth, to the mythological Christ of the Catholic Church. Thus, what I call the 'incarnational narrative,' so widespread in the early second century, was in Harnack's model a stage of mythologizing the historical Jesus. The descent of the Son of God as a man was itself enough to mark it as a gnostic-influenced system and to receive the label 'naïve docetism.'[3]

However, the documents that present a catholic incarnational narrative observed in chapters three through fifteen, when they were not silent, maintained the fleshly reality of Christ during his suffering, death, and resurrection. Salvation thus included the redemption of the material, fleshly body, not an escape from the flesh. Such incarnational events—experiences of the heavenly one while united with fleshly humanity—are therefore 'non-docetic' in the catholic sense of incarnation. Contrary to Harnack's and Rudolph's perspectives, 'incarnational' is not the same as 'docetic,' and though the catholics of the early second century could perhaps be accused of 'naïve incarnationalism,' the label 'naïve docetism' is inappropriate. One wonders what a non-docetic view of the incarnation would consist of if not a retention of the fleshly body by the pre-incarnate Son/Logos, including the physical resurrection and, when addressed in the texts, the assumption into heaven.

Thus, an incarnational narrative follows a consistent pattern of incarnational events: birth, death, resurrection, ascension. All the details need not be explicit, but none can be denied. In this light, non-incarnational narratives may differ from the incarnational narrative at several points, and therefore differ from each other to varying degrees. Some may confess that the heavenly being did not

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W. Coxon, K. H. Kuhn, and R. McL. Wilson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984), 159, 161.

[3] See Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanen, vol. 1 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1905), 190–95.

take on true fleshly humanity; others that he dwelled only temporarily in a human being or human form; still others that he began as a human being but shed humanity like an empty shell at death or resurrection; or that he moved like a transient from host to host in the mission of cosmic redemption. These and similar notions would be quite distinct from the consistent catholic pattern of the incarnate person and work of Christ observed in the preceding chapters.

Yet the historical fact remains that while catholic Christian identity centered on the incarnational narrative continued to be promoted and defended in increasingly sophisticated ways throughout the second century, eventually overcoming and even suppressing opposing views, other forms of Christianity attempted to promote and defend their own christologies. So, in this and the following chapters I will show three things. First, by a survey of the christological narratives of numerous non-catholic writings from the second century, I will demonstrate that these accounts differed from the catholic incarnational narrative to varying degrees. Second, I will highlight evidence of the polemical nature of many of these texts as they directed anti-incarnational arguments against incarnational catholic Christians. Third, I will point out how some non-catholics employed what may be called a 'non-incarnational hermeneutic' in their interpretations of earlier texts and traditions.

It follows, then, that in light of the established incarnational identity of catholic Christians by the end of the first century and beginning of the second, non-incarnational texts, traditions, and teachers would have been excluded from catholic fellowship based primarily on christological confessional grounds.[4] Furthermore, in

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[4] This argues against the common scholarly opinions expressed, for example, by George W. MacRae, 'Why the Church Rejected Gnosticism,' in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E. P. Sanders, Albert I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson, vol. 1, *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 126–27; R. A. Markus, 'The Problem of Self-Definition: From Sect to Church,' in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E. P. Sanders, Albert I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson, vol. 1, *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 1–15.

light of the stable position of the incarnational narrative as the center and source of catholic Christian identity and unity in the early second century, it could be maintained that competing non-catholic movements, like that of Marcion, established their unique identities vis-à-vis catholic Christianity by specifically and intentionally challenging the central point of reference, the incarnational narrative.[5] That is, just as catholic identity had been forged on the anvil of the incarnational narrative, so also any teacher, text, or tradition that sought to establish itself as a distinct movement would most effectively position itself against catholic Christianity by propounding a different christological narrative. Of course, not all movements that were later rejected as non-catholic or heretical necessarily sought this distinction, but rather desired to be numbered with the 'Great Church.'[6] Yet history suggests that a number of individuals and groups desired to establish distinct identities independent of the catholic Christian meta-community, and they would therefore have been disposed toward consciously altering specific aspects of catholic Christian tradition to fix their unique identities. In short, it was the catholics' insistence on the incarnational narrative as the center of their Christian identity that became the source of conflict with non-incarnational communities; it was not the other way around.

In sum, if diverse groups of catholic Christians identified themselves as part of a united meta-community through

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[5] According to Epiphanius, Marcion split from the Roman church in the middle of the second century over doctrinal differences (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42.1–2). See Gerd Lüdemann, 'Zur Geschichte des ältesten Christentums in Rom,' *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 70 (1979): 95–96.

[6] Valentinus may be an example of a subtler modification of the incarnational christology in an attempt to remain within the structures of catholic identity. As such, it may be that the 'Valentinian school' deviated far more noticeably from catholic confessional norms than did their founder. See Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe, vol. 65 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 305–11.

faithfulness to the confession of an incarnational narrative, then non-catholic communities would have distinguished themselves from catholic Christians by christological narratives that revised or rejected elements of the incarnational narrative. While the burden of evidence for catholic documents required that a particular text did not deviate from an incarnational narrative, other texts would fail to measure up to the burden of evidence if it departed from the incarnational narrative at even one point. As will be demonstrated below, this is the very tendency evidenced by the non-catholic witnesses.

NON-INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVES OF THE SECOND CENTURY

While most of the extant catholic writings examined in this study could be situation within a general timeframe or location, the date and provenance of most non-catholic writings is much more difficult—if not outright impossible—to establish with a sufficiently narrow range or degree of likelihood. However, because I have already argued that the catholic Christians regarded the explicitly incarnational narrative as central to their identity and theology, my purpose in analyzing non-catholic sources is not to present a full, contextualized picture of each individual christology, but to demonstrate that their christologies deviated from the central incarnational narrative of catholic Christianity at crucial points. This would create not merely an alternative perspective within a loosely defined Christian identity, but an alternative Christianity that would have been regarded as non-Christian by a well-defined second century catholic community.

Figure 34: Division of non-catholic testimony based on relevance of christological content (primary or secondary) and approximate date (early or later), as well as a list of tertiary testimony (very late or quasi-Christian)

	Early Testimony c. 100–150	Later Testimony c. 150–225	Tertiary Testimony c. 200 +
Primary (Strong christological content)	*Ap. Jas.* *Gos. Truth* *Treat. Res.* *Gos. Thom.* *2 Apoc. Jas.* *Treat. Seth* *Trim. Prot.* *Act. John*	*Pr. Paul* *Tri. Trac.* *1 Apoc. Jas.* *Acts Pet. 12* *Apost.* *Apoc. Peter* *Ep. Pet. Phil.* *Melch.* *Testim. Truth* *Val. Exp.* *Gos. Judas*	*Gos. Phil.* *Orig. World* *Exeg. Soul* *Thom. Cont.* *Auth. Teach.* *Teach. Silv.* *Zost.* *Int. Know.* *Sent. Sextus*
Secondary (Weak christological content)	*Soph. Jes. Chr.* *Dial. Sav.* *Apoc. Adam* *Act Pet.*	*Ap. John* *Hyp. Arch.* *Gos. Egypt.* *Apoc. Paul* *Great Pow.* *Paraph. Shem* *Gos. Mary*	

The survey of non-catholic sources in the following chapters is ordered in descending degrees of relevance (see Figure 34 above). The first category includes those writings that are regarded by scholars as possibly arising from the early to middle second century (100–150 CE) and whose contents address tenets of a christological narrative either directly or indirectly. The second category includes documents likely arising in the later second or early third centuries (150–225), whose contents either explicitly or implicitly address issues affecting a christological narrative. The majority of these texts provides examples of non-incarnational narratives, anti-incarnational positioning against catholic Christians, or non-incarnational hermeneutics applied to earlier Christian texts and

traditions. A third category of tertiary texts will be treated briefly at the end of this section.[7]

CONTEXT: THE 'HERETICS' AS THE CATHOLICS SAW THEM

I introduce this examination with a brief account of some catholic reports of the christological narratives that were rejected by catholic Christians. These include the teachings commonly attributed to the late first or early second century 'heretics' as relayed through the writings of second century heresiologists. Though most of our heresiological sources come to us from the second half of the second century, they still provide indirect evidence for earlier catholic reactions to teachers of the early second century. Late second century writers often relied on the oral or written testimonies of the previous generation of Christians when addressing the beliefs of earlier non-catholics. As such, they would not only have relayed the earlier reports of a teacher's beliefs, but also the specific reasons for rejection. Therefore, a late second century report of an early second century 'heretic' may still provide a shadowy glimpse of the state of the incarnational narrative among early second century catholic Christians.[8]

Justin refers to heretical groups such as Marcionites, Valentinians, Basilidians, and Saturnilians as those who are 'all outside of our communion' (Justin, *Dial.* 35.5).[9] Though confessing

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[7] The following texts, regarded by many as containing no distinctly Christian content, will be excluded from this survey: *Disc. 8–9*, *Pr. Thanks*, *Asclepius*, *Plato Rep.*, *Eugnostos*, *Thund.*, *Steles Seth*, *Norea*, *Marsanes*, *Allogenes*, and *Hypsiph.* (see Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1996], 15). The necessarily broad scope of this survey will require that I must be selective in my discussion of individual critical issues as well as my interaction with the growing secondary literature available for each text.

[8] Even if catholic presentations of 'heretics' were actually caricatures, they still serve as subjective projections of what an adversary of 'true' catholic Christianity looked like to them, highlighting for us the catholic's perception of catholic identity vis-à-vis their supposed antagonists.

[9] The translation used for Justin's *Diaogue with Trypho* is that of

to be Christians, they taught false doctrines which made those 'adherents of the true and pure Christian doctrine more ardent in our faith and more firm in the hope he announced to us' (Just. *Dial.* 35.2).[10]

According to Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, Menander and Saturninus were both active in Antioch in the late first and early second centuries.[11] Irenaeus pointed out their denigration of the material aspect of humanity, rendering salvation an escape from fleshly existence while the body 'decomposed into its original elements' (Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.24.1). Saturninus's christology took on a purely docetic character: 'the Saviour was without birth, without body, and without figure, but was, by supposition, a visible man' (1.24.2). Grant notes, 'Obviously Saturninus' Christology was extremely "high", so high that the humanity of Jesus evaporated. This is not Ignatius' doctrine.'[12]

Thomas B. Falls, Michael Slusser, and Thomas P. Halton, eds, *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho*, Selections from the Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003). For Irenaeus, I have used the translation of Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus* (Edinburgh: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885; reprint, New York: Scribner's, 1899).

[10] Thomassen, however, claims that there is no basis for assuming Justin actually represented a majority view of Christians in Rome (Einar Thomassen, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome,' *Harvard Theological Review* 94 [2004]: 242). In light of the findings of the previous chapter on the incarnational narrative in Rome, Justin's statements seem to fit what one would expect to be the general consensus of most presbyters and teachers in the Roman Christian communities.

[11] See Just. *1 Apol.* 25; *Dial.* 35; Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.23.5; 1.24.2. See Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* (London: T. &. T. Clark, 2003), 77–79; Birger A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 33–35.

[12] See Robert M. Grant, 'Conflict in Christology at Antioch,' *Studia patristica* 18, no. 1 (1983): 143.

The teacher Basilides was evidently active in Alexandria in the middle of the second century.[13] According to Irenaeus's understanding of Basilides, Jesus

> appeared, then, on earth as a man, to the nations of these powers, and wrought miracles. Wherefore he did not himself suffer death, but Simon, a certain man of Cyrene, being compelled, bore the cross in his stead; so that this latter being transfigured by him, that he might be thought to be Jesus, was crucified, through ignorance and error, while Jesus himself received the form of Simon, and, standing by, laughed at them. For since he was an incorporeal power, and the Nous (mind) of the unborn father, he transfigured himself as he pleased, and thus ascended to him who had sent him, deriding them, inasmuch as he could not be laid hold of, and was invisible to all.[14]

Because salvation belongs only to the soul, the fleshly body would not be resurrected or redeemed—a statement that, by analogy, would presuppose a rejection of a fleshly resurrection of Christ (Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.24.5). Irenaeus also alleges information about the late first or early second century teacher, Cerinthus:

> He represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being. (*Adv. haer.* 1.26.1)

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[13] Markschies, *Gnosis*, 79–81; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 134–144.

[14] Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.24.4. Compare Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 7.27.7. See Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, trans. Anthony Alcock (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 126–27.

Similarly, the teacher Caprocrates apparently believed Jesus was the human son of Joseph, but, being especially pure, the spirit of Christ descended upon him to rescue him from the material world (Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.25.1).

Like Cerdo before him (Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.27.1; 3.4.3), Marcion disparaged material existence, denying the fleshly incarnation of Christ.[15] Around 144 CE, when Marcion tried to convince the Roman presbyters and teachers of the veracity of his doctrines, he apparently gained no official following (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42.1–2).[16]

Besides these proto-gnostic teachers, the catholic Christians complained of deviant Jewish Christian groups. The sect called Ebionites evidently rejected the pre-incarnate existence of Christ as well as the virgin birth (Iren. *Adv. haer.* 1.26.2).[17] Justin Martyr's discussion of both tolerable and intolerable types of Jewish Christianity in his *Dialogue with Trypho* is particularly illuminating, as it demonstrates the great diversity of traditions acceptable to some catholic Christians between 135 and 160 CE:

> But if some, due to their instability of will, desire to observe as
> many of the Mosaic precepts as possible—precepts which we

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[15] Markschies, *Gnosis*, 88.

[16] See Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott, eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche*, 2d edn, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, vol. 45 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960), 19–20.

[17] On the Ebionites, see Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, 2d edn, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 76–77; Sakari Häkkinen, 'Ebionites,' in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics,"* ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, Supplements to Vigiliae christianae, ed. J. den Boeft et al., vol. 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 247–78; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1977), 139–40; H. J. Schoeps, 'Ebionite Christianity,' in *Early Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Everett Ferguson, Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays, ed. Everett Ferguson, David M. Scholer, and Paul Corby Finney, vol. 6 (New York: Garland, 1993), 125–224.

> think were instituted because of your hardness of heart—while at the same time they place their hope in Christ, and if they desire to perform the eternal and natural acts of justice and piety, yet wish to live with us Christians and believers, as I already stated, not persuading them to be circumcised like themselves, or to observe the Sabbath, or to perform any other similar acts, then it is my opinion that we Christians should receive them and associate with them in every way as kinsmen and brethren. (*Dial.* 47.2)

Thus, Justin represents catholic Christians in the mid second century who accepted Jewish Christians whose traditions and observances differed greatly from Gentile Christians so long as they embraced a theology described in *Dialogue* 48 in terms of the catholic incarnational narrative. Yet he also acknowledged that some Jewish Christian groups deviated from that faith and were not counted among true Christians.[18]

In sum, the heresiological accounts of the second century point out specific deviations from tenets of the incarnational narrative.[19] These deviations emphasized either the humanity of Christ or the deity of Christ, failing to assert a full incarnational narrative of birth, death, and resurrection.

Of course, it must be emphasized that at this point we are dealing strictly with the second hand (and sometimes third hand) testimonies of early church leaders who had an interest in distinguishing themselves as clearly as possible from competing groups. In the next three chapters this general non-incarnational portrayal of non-catholic Christianities will be confirmed by direct testimony from their contemporary non-catholic writings.

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[18] On the christology of the early 'Jewish Christian' gospels and groups, see A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, Supplements to Vigiliae christianae, ed. J. den Boeft et al., vol. 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1992) and Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity from the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

[19] See the helpful critical overview of Christian heresiological reports on Gnosticism in Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 25–50.

CHAPTER 17. EARLY NON-CATHOLIC TESTIMONY (C. 100–150)

In the preceding chapters, we have seen a diversity of expressions of the incarnational narrative among catholic Christians as well as differing emphases placed on particular events in the narrative, depending on the theme or purpose of particular writings. When the texts did not address specific aspects of this core incarnational content, they did not explicitly reject or deny such content; and in most cases other indications in the texts implied the likely perception of the author regarding incarnation (e.g., the author's view of human resurrection in general). On a couple occasions, the testimony of a text may be ambiguous (*Gos. Pet.*, *Odes. Sol.*), in which case the reception and use of the texts themselves among catholic and non-catholic Christians is also ambiguous.

When we explore in greater detail the question of the christological narrative within non-catholic texts, the situation proves to be a mirror opposite of the catholic writings. The majority of texts either explicitly or implicitly reject key features of the incarnational narrative, whether in the form of a rejection of the Son's fleshly embodiment, true suffering, real death, or fleshly resurrection or ascension. In the majority of cases in which the text is not silent regarding the Savior's person and work, the non-catholic text departs from the incarnational narrative. As we observed with catholic writings, sometimes a non-catholic writer's view of certain aspects of their christological narrative may be implied, as is the case when an author's view of the non-fleshly nature of the eschatological resurrection implies his or her position on the nature of Christ's resurrection.

A non-incarnational narrative, therefore, is one that explicitly revises or rejects some or several tenets of the incarnational narrative. The difference may be severe or subtle, from a full-fledged monophysite docetism in which the spiritual Christ appears

on earth merely as a phantom in human form, to a quasi-incarnational narrative that asserts a union of the heavenly Savior with the human flesh until the point of the ascension, at which time the spiritual being sheds the temporary fleshly dwelling to enter the heavenly realm.[1] Between these poles, a large number of possible variations could be found. But the key missing element of the non-incarnational narrative is a sustained incarnation of the Son throughout an earthly life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Our investigation of non-catholic testimony begins with the literature that plausibly originated during the same period of time as the catholic literature explored in chapters 3–15. These writings are further categorized as either 'primary evidence'—those that substantially address christological issues and 'secondary evidence'—those writings from the same period that lightly contribute to a christological narrative. This chapter will confirm the accuracy of the second century catholic Christian portrayal of non-catholic Christianities as essentially 'non-incarnational' or even 'anti-incarnational.' The conclusions from this survey and its implications for the overall thesis of this book will be reserved for discussion in chapter 19.

EARLY TESTIMONY: PRIMARY EVIDENCE

The following works are regarded by many scholars as having probably originated during the first half of the second century. They also contain significant content from which a picture of the text's christological narrative can be sketched. Other texts

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[1] Stroumsa limits docetic concepts to the incarnation and passion: 'Either Christ was not really incarnated, as the divine and matter could not have a common ground, so Christ would be totally spiritual in nature; or Christ was indeed incarnated, but did not really suffer on the cross. These two views are not identical. The first, being broader, is inclusive of the second' (Guy G. Stroumsa, 'Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 [2004]: 268). To these approaches I would add one more in which both the spiritual part of Christ endures death to escape the physical, rendering the 'resurrection' a release from bodily existence, not a restoration to it.

originating at about the same time but with less substantial christological content will be treated in the next section (secondary early testimony).[2]

Apocryphon of James (NHC I,2). Though most date this text in the late second or early third century, several scholars have dated it in the early second century, with a likely Egyptian provenance.[3] The *Apocryphon of James* alleges to be a secret writing of James recording a post-resurrection revelation from Jesus (2,19–20).[4]

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[2] Franzmann classifies Nag Hammadi texts into three groups: 1) those that explicitly contain a 'Jesus' or 'Christ' figure: *Pr. Paul*, *Ap. Jas.*, *Gos. Truth*, *Treat. Res.*, *Tri. Trac.*, *Gos. Phil.*, *Orig. World*, *Thom. Cont.*, *Ap. John*, *Gos. Thom.*, *Gos. Eg.*, *Soph. Jes. Chr.*, *Acts Pet. 12 Apos.*, *Treat. Seth*, *Apoc. Pet.*, *Teach. Silv.*, *Ep. Pet. Phil.*, *Melch.*, *Testim. Truth*, *Interp. Know.*, *Val. Exp.*, *On Anoint.*, *On Bap. A*, *On Bap. B*, *On Euch. A*, and *Trim. Prot.*; 2) those that infer a Jesus figure: *Exeg. Soul*, *Dial. Sav.*, *1 Apoc. Jas.*, *2 Apoc. Jas.*, and *Great Pow.*; and 3) those that do not seem to contain a Jesus figure: *Hyp. Arch.*, *Apoc. Paul*, *Zost.*, *Apoc. Adam*, and *Paraph. Shem* (see Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1996], xv).

[3] Francis E. Williams, 'The Apocryphon of James: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 26–27. For the view that *Ap. Jas.* was written during the first half of the second century, see Ron Cameron, *Sayings Traditions in the Apocryphon of James*, Harvard Theological Studies, vol. 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 129–30; W. C. van Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings: A Preliminary Survey of the Nag-Hammadi Find*, Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 30 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960), 87–88.

[4] Except in the case of numbered logia, such as found in *Gos. Thom.*, numbers after a tractate title refer to the page of the codex followed by a comma and the line or lines of the codex (e.g., '*Ap. Jas.* 2,19–20' refers to lines 19 and 20 of page 2 of codex I). If there is any ambiguity about which codex or tractate, these numbers will be included for clarification (e.g. '*Gos. Truth* I,*3* 37,9–10' refers to lines 9 and 10 of page 37, from the third tractate of codex I). This has become the standard method of citing the Nag Hammadi Codices.

Williams notes, 'Our document's Christology … is so unusual that it is difficult to associate with any other.'[5] With such a valuation, the prospect of tying catholic connections seems unlikely. Nevertheless, *Apocryphon of James* affirms a narrative of the Savior's descent into the world,[6] his crucifixion and death (5,31–35), and his resurrection and ascension (2,20–21). And at one point the Lord even said to the disciples, 'Observe that I have descended and have spoken and undergone tribulation and carried off my crown after saving you. For I came down to dwell with you so that you in turn might dwell with me' (8,37–9,4). In fact, the cross is regarded as central to the soteriology of *Apocryphon of James* (6,2–7).

Nevertheless, though the *Apocryphon of James* wears the outer trappings of a typical passion account, a closer examination reveals that these garments actually clothe a non-incarnational narrative.[7] Williams notes, 'Though our document is less obviously Gnostic than many Nag Hammadi tractates, one would scarcely term its theology "orthodox." It condemns the flesh as such (12.12–13), concentrates on the ascent of the spirit (soul?) to heaven, and says nothing of a bodily resurrection.'[8] Furthermore, there is no clear mention of a bodily, fleshly incarnation. The references of the descent make no mention of an actual birth or even bodily existence.[9] In fact, the text contrasts flesh, spirit, and soul, and appears to disparage the flesh (11,38–12,13), noting that 'none of those who have worn the flesh (ϕOPI ҃NCAPӠ) will be saved.' Salvation in the *Apocryphon of James* is therefore the casting off of the fleshly body and the ascent of the spirit. This explains the eagerness for physical death as a gateway to eternal life (5,6–9; 21–23). Corresponding to this soteriological expectation, the accounts of the Savior's descent are not incarnational, and his ascension appears as a shedding of his physical dwelling (14,32–36).

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[5] Williams, 'The Apocryphon of James: Introduction,' 26.

[6] *Ap. Jas.* 2,23–24; 8,37–9,4; 10,15–20; 13,9–17; 14,19–21; 14,37–40.

[7] Dietrich Voorgang, *Die Passion Jesu und Christi in der Gnosis*, European University Studies, series 23: Theology, vol. 432 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1991), 120–24.

[8] Williams, 'The Apocryphon of James: Introduction,' 21.

[9] See references above, note 6.

Gospel of Truth (NHC I,3 and XII,2). If *Gospel of Truth* is the same Valentinian writing mentioned by Irenaeus in *Adversus haereses* 3.11.9, we could date the text rather narrowly between 140 and 180 CE.[10] And if it was composed by Valentinus himself (or one of his near followers), it establishes a type of christology present in Rome around the middle of the second century.[11] It is important to note that Valentinus, so close to the catholic community of Rome, would have made the christocentric incarnational narrative his point of identification with the Christian community. That he maintained this identity is evidenced by the fact that he functioned as a tolerated teacher among catholic Christians for some time before his theology was regarded as errant.[12]

One discerns a relatively high christology in *Gospel of Truth*. The Son stands in a very close relationship with the unknown

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[10] This identification is a possibility, but by no means certain. See, for example, Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, 'The Gospel of Truth: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 65–66.

[11] See Jacques-É Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 34–38; Arthur D. Nock, 'A Coptic Library of Gnostic Writings,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1958): 323. Some, however, dispute the conclusion that *Gos. Truth* is a work of the Valentinian school: Johannes Leipoldt, 'Das Evangelium Veritatis,' *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 82 (1957): 831; R. McL. Wilson, 'Valentinianism and the Gospel of Truth,' in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 1, *The School of Valentinus*, Studies in the History of Religions, vol. 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 133–41.

[12] See Iren. *Adv. haer.* 3.4.3. Several reasons for this have been suggested (see Einar Thomassen, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome,' *Harvard Theological Review* 94 [2004]: 245–46). It may be that Valentinus represents the extreme diversity accepted by catholic Christians in Rome if they perceived that a particular teacher adhered to the incarnational narrative.

Father, as his leading emanation (I,*3* 37,9; 41,29).[13] However, the transcendent Son and the earthly Jesus are never explicitly equated. Though Jesus suffered (20,10–14), this is never affirmed for the Son. Attridge and MacRae conclude, 'Although the text is not strictly docetic in its treatment of Jesus, it does seem to reflect a Christology which makes a fundamental distinction in the nature and functions of the revealer figures, with Jesus Christ providing in the phenomenal world the same revelation provided to the Father's emanations by the Son.'[14]

In the descent of the Logos into the realm of ignorance, we see some kind of corporeal manifestation, though the term 'flesh' is avoided (26,4–8). Yet certain statements in *Gospel of Truth* sound suspiciously like the elements of an incarnational christology. Indeed, since its discovery, scholars have vigorously debated whether this writing is essentially docetic or anti-docetic.[15] The passage which draws the most attention regarding the question of the incarnation in *Gospel of Truth* is 31,1–6. Here we read: 'For he came by means of fleshly form.' Arai notes, 'Dieser Satz ist mit besonderer Sorgfalt zu betrachten, da die Frage, ob die Christologie des EvVer doketistisch ist oder nicht.'[16] On this note, Ménard comments,

> Il semble bien que la σάρξ du Sauveur, que les hyliques n'ont pas reconnue (ligne 5), corresponde au σαρκίον des documents valentiniens; ce σαρκίον n'a évidemment rien d'hylique ni de charnel. Le Christ-Logos est inclus dans le Sauveur, et celui-ci s'enveloppe à son tour du Christ psychique, puis du corps psychique provenant de l'«économie» de l'Incarnation.[17]

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[13] See Attridge and MacRae, 'The Gospel of Truth: Introduction,' 73.

[14] Ibid., 75.

[15] Sasagu Arai, *Die Christologie des Evangelium Veritatis: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 18; Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. P. W. Coxon, K. H. Kuhn, and R. McL. Wilson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984), 160.

[16] Arai, *Die Christologie des Evangelium Veritatis*, 77.

[17] Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité*, 145. Franzmann appropriately warns

Gospel of Truth begins by mentioning that the grace of knowing the Father comes 'through the power of the Word that came forth from the pleroma' (16,34–35). Jesus Christ came and enlightened those in darkness, and because of his teaching of the truth, he was persecuted, nailed to a tree, and 'became a fruit of the knowledge of the Father' (18,11–31). In this sense the death of Jesus appears to be primarily a revelation (see 20,1–21,5). Though it appears that the Christ figure in *Gospel of Truth* actually endures death (20,28–30), *Gospel of Truth* disparages the fleshly existence as a necessary vehicle for revelation, but not a permanent reality (20,30–34). Rather, the physical world and presumably fleshly existence, is regarded as a temporary and undesirable imperfection (24,20–24; 25,3–6; 25,10–19).

With regard to hermeneutical issues, Jacqueline Williams has argued that the writer of *Gospel of Truth* utilized many common Christian texts and traditions, but reinterpreted them in support of a fully developed Valentinian gnostic system.[18] Based on its dependence upon earlier catholic Christian traditions, it appears to some scholars that the book was primarily written for Christians familiar with catholic Christianity, but not yet initiated into gnostic beliefs.[19] Thus, if the incarnational narrative marked the identity of

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about the ambiguity of the term 'flesh' used in the Nag Hammadi tracates: 'What these texts mean by "flesh" is not always clear, especially with their propensity for using words which can be interpreted in at least two ways. For the most part, the Jesus who is a spiritual being hides his spiritual "flesh" under shapes, likenesses or a human body. With these texts, the unity of Jesus' heavenly existence is preserved within the earthly context. There is no diminishment of his spiritual self by his coming to the earthly context and no progression towards a real complementarity of natures where a multiplicity of forms is attested in his human being' (Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 72).

[18] Jacqueline A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, vol. 79 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 186–87. Also see Attridge and MacRae, 'The Gospel of Truth: Introduction,' 81.

[19] Harold W. Attridge, 'The Gospel of Truth as an Exoteric Text,' in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick and

catholic Christianity in Rome during the generation preceding the rise of Valentinianism, one would expect a document directed toward catholic Christians to employ images, concepts, and language that would move a reader from the catholic understanding of the christological narrative toward a non-incarnational narrative. To do this, the writing would need to use old language with new meanings. This is, I believe, what we see in *Gospel of Truth*, which exhibits a reinterpretation of catholic tradition. This therefore indirectly substantiates the existence of a widespread and foundational incarnational narrative as a mark of catholic identity in the early second century.[20]

Treatise on the Resurrection (Epistle to Rheginos) (NHC I,4). Though the Valentinian *Treatise on the Resurrection* has occasionally been regarded as having been drafted by Valentinus himself in the 140s, most scholars hold that the book was written by a member of the Valentinian school in the late second century.[21] As such, it is quite close to the catholic traditions concerning the incarnation, especially the teaching of the complementary two natures, as in 44,21–33:

> Now the Son of God, Rheginos, was Son of Man. He embraced them both, possessing the humanity and the divinity, so that on the one hand he might vanquish death through his being Son of God, and that on the other through the Son of Man the restoration to the Pleroma might occur; because he was originally from above, a seed of the Truth, before this structure (of the cosmos) had come into being.

Robert Hodgson Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 239–55.

[20] See R. McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem: A Study of the Relations between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gnostic Heresy* (London: Mowbray, 1958), 163.

[21] Malcolm L. Peel, 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 145–46.

One can find nothing in this quotation that could not be read in conformity with the catholic incarnational narrative. Nevertheless, the christological narrative differs from the catholic incarnational narrative in that Jesus is not believed to have had a fleshly body after the resurrection (45,14– 46,2). Rather, he experienced a 'spiritual resurrection (ⲦⲀⲚⲀⲤⲦⲀⲤⲒⲤ Ⲛ̄ⲠⲚⲈⲨⲘⲀⲦⲒⲔⲎ) which swallows up the psychic (Ⲛ̄ⲦⲮⲨⲬⲒⲔⲎ) in the same way as the flesh (ⲦⲔⲈⲤⲀⲢⲔⲒⲔⲎ).' In his work on the resurrection in early Christianity, Wright notes, 'The writer is clearly working with the terminology which Paul uses in 1 Corinthians, but the likeness is superficial. … The *Treatise on Resurrection* shares with Valentinianism a deep scepticism about the value of the created world.'[22] Similarly, Ménard notes that the author suggested that we will have a 'chair spirituelle immédiatement après sa mort (p. 45, 24–46, 2).'[23]

So, although *Treatise on the Resurrection* comes close to the catholic incarnational narrative in much of its language about the person and passion of Christ, it completely differs from the catholic view of the resurrection. The author does refer to a so-called resurrection of 'flesh'—'Why will you not receive flesh (Ⲛ̄ⲦⲤⲀⲢⲌ) when you ascend into the Aeon' (46,6–8), yet this is not a 'flesh' in continuity with the body that died, but a new spiritual body given upon the ascent after death. This 'spiritual resurrection' is a common theme in the Valentinian concept of personal eschatology.[24]

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[22] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 540. See Malcolm L. Peel, 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: Notes,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex) Notes*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 166.

[23] Jacques-É Ménard, 'La notion de "resurrection" dans l'*Épître à Rhèginos*,' in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. Martin Krause, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 112.

[24] Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, trans. Anthony Alcock (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 120–21; Peel, 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: Notes,' 167.

Gospel of Thomas (NHC II,2). Most scholars today regard the Greek original of *Gospel of Thomas* to have been written in Syria.[25] Some have dated it in the first century, though most place it in its final form sometime before the middle of the second.[26] It seems plausible, however, given the nature of the document itself, that its composition, collection, or redaction occurred throughout the first and second centuries as a primitive collection of sayings periodically modified and expanded until the present form took shape sometime in the second century. With regard to its theology, Wright probably goes too far in his estimation of the *Gospel of Thomas*'s concept of the resurrection: 'This, if not full-blown gnosticism of the Valentinian variety, is certainly well on the way to such a view in its cosmological and anthropological dualism, and the soteriology that goes with it.'[27] However, I can agree with him in the following: 'Though using materials from early Christianity, it has incorporated them within a very different worldview. In that worldview … resurrection (in the sense meant by Paul, the gospel

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[25] See Osacar Cullmann, 'The Gospel of Thomas and the Problem of the Age of the Tradition Contained Therein,' *Interpretation* 16 (1962): 427; Michael Desjardins, 'Where Was the Gospel of Thomas Written?,' *Toronto Journal of Theology* 8 (1992): 121–33; Henri-Charles Puech, 'Gnostic Gospels and Related Documents,' in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Edgar Henneck and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, vol. 1, *Gospels and Related Writings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 287; Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings*, 49–50.

[26] Those who date it in the first century include Helmut Koester, 'Introduction to the Gospel According to Thomas,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7, together with XIII,2, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 1, *Gospel According to Thomas*, *Gospel According to Philip*, *Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 39. Those who place it in the second century include Cullmann, 'The Gospel of Thomas and the Problem of the Age of the Tradition Contained Therein,' 427; Puech, 'Gnostic Gospels and Related Documents,' 305; R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (London: Mowbray, 1960), 7–8.

[27] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 537.

traditions, Clement, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, Justin and the rest) is simply ruled out.'[28]

On the nature of Jesus, *Gospel of Thomas* suggests that the Savior's identity is a great unutterable mystery. *Gospel of Thomas* 13 gives an account in which Jesus asks the disciples, 'Compare me to someone and tell me whom I am like.' After comparing him to a 'righteous angel' and 'wise philosopher,' Thomas answers, 'Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom you are like' (NHC II,*2* 34,31–35,4). Then Jesus takes Thomas aside and gives him three secret words, the utterance of which would result in judgment. Gärtner argues that the unutterable words are actually the divine name, expressing Christ's mysterious and unutterable nature.[29] At least the message is clear that Jesus's nature is greater than simply that of a human teacher or even an angelic being.

Later, in a brief dialogue, Salome asks 'Who are you, man, that you … have come up on my couch and eaten from my table?' (*Gos. Thom.* 61). He answers, 'I am he who exists from the undivided. I was given some of the things of my Father' (NHC II,*2* 43,28–30).[30] The Coptic text reads, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲙⲡⲉⲧϣⲏϣ— literally, 'I am he who exists from him who is equal.'[31] Jesus's initial words, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ, may correspond to the divine ἐγώ εἰμι formula, and with the following reference to existence from ⲡⲉⲧϣⲏϣ—'he who is equal or a unity,' the phrase is somewhat reminiscent of Ignatius's own description of Christ as the one who 'came forth from one Father and remained with the One and returned to the One.'[32] Though set in unfamiliar contexts and using strange language, we find nothing here that would fundamentally alter a

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Bertil E. Gärtner, *The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas* (London: Collins, 1961), 118–28.

[30] Nordsieck translates the final line, 'Mir ist gegeben worden von dem, was meines Vaters ist' (Reinhard Nordsieck, *Das Thomas-Evangelium* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), 239.

[31] The Coptic ϣⲱϣ means 'equality, sameness' (Richard Smith, *A Concise Coptic-English Lexicon*, 2d edn [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999], s.v. ϣⲱϣ).

[32] See above, Ign. *Magn.* 7.2, pp. 98–99.

catholic portrayal of Jesus as having come from a heavenly place in unity with the Father, sharing with him an unutterable name, perhaps the name of divinity.

Gospel of Thomas also seems to suggest some kind of adoption of human form: 'Jesus said, "I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh (ϩⲛ ⲥⲁⲣⲝ)"' (*Gos. Thom.* 28 [38:21–22]). The text of P.Oxy. 1.11–21a reads λέγει Ἰησοῦς; ἔστιν ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ ὤφθην αὐτοῖς. The Greek ὁράω could be read in two different ways: as ontological (a manifestation of Christ's real existence), or as phenomenological (the subjective perception of the disciples).[33] On the Coptic version, Franzmann notes, 'Here again there is the concept of taking on flesh or human form only as an outward appearance so that others may see and communicate with Jesus within the earthly context.'[34] And Gärtner argues that the Greek texts itself represents a clear indiciation of docetic epiphany rather than allowing for an incarnational interpretation.[35]

In *Gospel of Thomas* 15, Jesus says, 'When you see one who was not born of woman, prostrate yourselves on your faces and worship him. That one is your Father' (NHC II,*2* 35,28–31). Though deity is often referred to as 'unbegotten' (ἀγέννητος),[36] the additional ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ, 'out of the woman,' may directly address the Pauline assertion that Jesus was 'born of a woman' (γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός) in Gal 4:4. Simply asserting that Christ was ἀγέννητος would not transgress the catholic incarnational christology, as this could be taken as a reference to this eternal divine nature (see Ign. *Eph.* 7.2). However, expressly denying a birth from a woman differs from the incarnational narrative.[37]

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[33] Walter Bauer et al., eds, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. ὁράω.

[34] Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 78.

[35] Gärtner, *The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas*, 141–43.

[36] See, for example, *Eugnostos* (NHC III,*3* 71,18–72,6) and incorporated into *Soph. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,*4* 94,14–24).

[37] On the identification of Christ as the one not born of woman in *Gos. Thom.*, see Gärtner, *The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas*, 136–37.

In other places, *Gospel of Thomas* seems to explicitly reject elements of the incarnational narrative, including the fleshly resurrection.[38] Wright suggests that Saying 71 ('I will destroy this house, and no one will be able to rebuild it') refers not to the temple structure in Jerusalem, but, relying on common images of the physical body as a house, this is 'an explicit denial of bodily resurrection.'[39] In light of other negative assessments of the physical and fleshly body (Saying 29, 37, 87, 112), we may safely assume that the community of the second century *Gospel of Thomas* would not have embraced the resurrection of Christ in a fleshly body, falling short of a full incarnational narrative.[40]

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[38] AnneMarie Luijendijk, however, argues that in the Greek version of *Gos. Thom.* 5, the saying 'nothing is buried that will not be raised (θεθαμμέννον δ ο[ὐκ ἐγερθήσεται]) gives 'intimations of bodily resurrection' (AnneMarie Luijendijk, 'Buried and Raised: *Gospel of Thomas* Logion 5 and Resurrection,' in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi, Lance Jenott, Nicola Denzey Lewis, and Philippa Townsend, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, vol. 82 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013], 274–275). However, this line is conspicuously missing from the Coptic version of *Gos. Thom.*, suggesting either an attempt by orthodox redactors to rehabilitate the theology of *Gos. Thom.*, an attempt by non-catholic Christians to remove the orthodox confession in the bodily resurrection, or evidence that diverse versions of *Gos. Thom.*, with differing theological orientations, were extant in the early church.

[39] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 536. Riley argues that *Gos. Thom.* 71 preserves a version of the same saying found in John 2:19, which asserts the opposite: whereas John's saying affirms the bodily resurrection, *Gos. Thom.* rejects it (Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 127–56). While Riley sees this this as an example of two early christologies in conflict, this may also be a case of *Gos. Thom.* applying an anti-incarnational hermeneutic to early traditions.

[40] Franzmann, arguing against most commentators that *Gos. Thom.* may portray a pre-resurrection dialogue, suggests that references to the 'living' Jesus (*Gos. Thom.* 52, 59, 111) and his apparent panentheistic association with the 'all' (*Gos. Thom.* 77), suggests a loose attachment to the physical earthly body, but this seems to presume an overarching

Second Apocalypse of James (NHC V,4). In all likelihood, *Second Apocalypse of James* predates the conventionally titled *First Apocalypse of James* and may come from the first half of the second century.[41] Of particular christological importance are the 'I am' (49,5–15) and 'he is' (58,2–20) sections, in which Christ describes himself and later James describes Christ. The first reveals a high christology, wherein Christ is regarded as the first begotten son, the beloved, righteous one, son of the Father, who came to reveal what he heard, destroy the dominion of all, and pass on commandments (49,5–15). In the second section James describes Christ as the one who not only created heaven and earth, but dwelled in it (58,2–5). He is the life and the light, and the coming one, the beginning and the end (58,7–13). He is also called the 'Holy Spirit,' the invisible one, the virgin, 'who did not descend upon the earth' (58,14–18).[42] James testifies that he saw Jesus 'naked, and there was no garment clothing him' (58,20–24), a reference to his coming to earth by stripping himself of his glorious heavenly garment (see *Gos. Phil.* 56.29–30).

In another passage the resurrected Christ instructs James to stretch out his hand and take hold of him (57,10–11). This is reminiscent of the similar passage in the canonical gospels of Luke and John. In Luke Jesus said to the disciples, 'See My hands and

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narratival context for *Gos. Thom.* that does not seem to exist (Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 78–81). Though adopting her examples would clearly help strengthen the evidence of my own thesis, I am unconvinced by her arguments. I am not sure that we ought to regard *Gos. Thom.* as anything other than a collection of sayings traditions, so the question of pre-resurrection and post-resurrection is probably not a safe guide for interpretation.

[41] Charles W. Hedrick, 'The (Second) Apocalypse of James: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 108.

[42] Rather than a quasi-personal name, the title 'holy spirit' emphasizes his essential spiritual nature and the virginity of Christ seems to assert his transcendence over the material world.

My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones (σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα) as you see that I have' (Luke 24:39). In John the resurrected Christ told the doubtful Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.' In contrast to this common catholic tradition regarding the bodily resurrection, the account in *Second Apocalypse of James* runs as follows: '[And] then I stretched out my hands and I did not find him as I thought (he would be). But afterward I heard him saying, "Understand and take hold of me." Then I understood, and I was afraid. And I was exceedingly joyful' (57,12–19). The resurrected Jesus in *Second Apocalypse of James* was a spiritual being who had discarded the flesh and was not able to be grasped by physical means.

Understandably, then, the concept of salvation includes putting on knowledge and escaping from the flesh (48,6–9).[43] And in the last prayer before his death (62,16–29), he declares, 'My God … who made me alive through a mystery. … Deliver me from this [place of] sojourn! … Bring me from a tomb alive. … Save me from sinful flesh, because I trusted in you with all my strength! … Because I am alive in you, your grace is alive in me.' So, it appears that James believed he had already put on life by a spiritual resurrection and that deliverance from the fleshly existence would be the fulfillment of his salvation.[44]

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[43] That this first person dialogue should be attributed to James rather than Jesus is argued well by Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 139, n. 1.

[44] There is some debate about the meaning of Christ's promise to James in 57,7–13: 'For just as you are first having clothed yourself, you are also the first who will strip himself, and you shall become as you were before you were stripped.' Veilleux understands the first clause ('having clothed yourself') as a reference to accepting the revelation, that is, a spiritual clothing. The next reference to stripping refers to the fleshly body. He then understands the next reference to being 'stripped' as a reference to James's pre-earthly condition, before he was stripped of his heavenly glory (Armand Veilleux, *La première apocalypse de Jacques (NH V,3), La seconde apocalypse de Jacques (NH V,4)*, Bibliothèque copte de Nag

Second Treatise of the Great Seth (NHC VII,2). Riley dates *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* in the second half of the second century.[45] Similar to catholic Christian writings, this text suggests a close association of Christ and the 'Father' (59,17–19; 70,5–6), but upon entering the earthly sphere, the heavenly being evicted the earthly inhabitant of the body: 'I visited a bodily dwelling. I cast out the one who was in it first, and I went in' (51,20–24).

Second Treatise of the Great Seth also presents a narrative in which Christ does not actually suffer and die: 'For my death which they think happened, (happened) to them in their error and blindness. They nailed their man up to their death. For their minds did not see me, for they were deaf and blind' (55,30–56,2). It was Simon who endured suffering a death while Christ stood by and laughed

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Hammadi: Textes, vol. 17 [Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986], 150–51). The alternative, it seems, would be that the final promise of becoming 'as you were before you were stripped' would refer to a fleshly resurrection—a return to the state in which he died. This seems improbable, given the general tenor of rejection of the fleshly condition. Veilleux's interpretation does seem to fit a common gnostic view that those who are redeemed are those souls who 'fell' into corruptible flesh from the pleroma. I find Franzmann's reinterpretation to be unsatisfactory: 'James has already been clothed in the heavenly clothing (perhaps through his knowledge of, or union with, the Lord), but he will have to strip this off, just as the Lord has done, in order to go through the passion which means moving from perishability to imperishability. Having triumphed through the passion, James will return to the state of being clothed in the heavenly garment which he had before' (Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 83, n. 1). I find this reading unnecessarily complex. It seems that Christ shed his heavenly garment when he came into the world, not specifically for the passion (46,10–19, though, admittedly, the passage is a bit fragmentary). Veilleux's interpretation seems to satisfy the evidence with the greatest conservation of necessary explanations and assumptions.

[45] Gregory Riley, 'Second Treatise of the Greath Seth: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 30, ed. James M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 142.

(56,9–56,19).[46] Such an account of the crucifixion is clearly excluded by the catholic incarnational narrative.[47]

Because the Gnostic redeemer comes to rescue the light from the darkness, to awaken men and lead them back to their celestial home, 'braucht es kein Leiden, kein Kreuz, keine Auferstehung.'[48] Besides presenting an indisputably non-incarnational narrative, *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* also takes a polemical stand specifically against catholic Christians, focusing its attacks on key aspects of the incarnational narrative. As such, *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* explicitly rejects the notion of imitating Christ in death through martyrdom (49,26–27) and complains that the catholic Christians hold to 'the doctrine of a dead man' (60,22).[49] There can be no doubt that *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* explicitly levels its polemic against the incarnational narrative of the catholic Christians and in its place offers a non-incarnational, even anti-incarnational, narrative.[50]

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[46] See Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 126; Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, ed. Stephen Emmel and Johannes van Oort, vol. 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 139; Guy G. Stroumsa, 'Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004): 271.

[47] See Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, 'Der zweite Logos des großen Seth: Gedanken zur Christologie in der zweiten Schrift des Codex VII,' in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. Martin Krause, Nag Hammadi Studies, vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 275. Tröger notes that this christology is similar to that described by Irenaeus against Basilides (ibid., 269).

[48] Tröger, 'Der zweite Logos des großen Seth,' 270.

[49] See the similar charge of belief 'in a dead man' in *Apoc. Pet.* (NHC VII,*3* 74.13–15).

[50] I do not make a sharp distinction between attacks against the doctrine of the incarnational narrative and against the catholic applicatons of the narrative in baptism, eucharist, Sunday worship, and martyrdom as these commemorations and imitations of the incarnational narrative were themselves confessional in nature.

Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII, 1). Though the text appears to have gone through several redactions, the *Trimorphic Protennoia* may have reached its present form by the middle of the second century.[51] In its treatment of themes similar to those of the Johannine Prologue,[52] the *Trimorphic Protennoia* may set forth a polemical reinterpretation of the tradition in Sethian gnostic terms.[53] Turner notes: 'On balance it seems that the final redaction of *Trimorphic Protennoia* does employ Johannine language in such a way as to score a polemical point against more orthodox Christian views of Christ's incarnation.'[54] In fact, Turner suggests that the 'goal of the tractate is to show the poverty of orthodox

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[51] John D. Turner, 'Trimorphic Protennoia: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 401.

[52] See R. McL. Wilson, 'The *Trimophic Protennoia*,' in *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers Read at the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, September 8th–13th 1975)*, ed. Martin Krause, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 50–54.

[53] On the possible dependence of *Trim. Prot.* on the Gospel of John, see Yvonne Janssens, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel,' in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson*, ed. Alastair H. B. Logan and A. J. M. Wedderburn (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983), 229–44; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 157–61. However, many regard the Johannine prologue and the *Trim. Prot.* as having a common mythological or exegetical background (see, for example, Carsten Colpe, 'Heidnische, jüdnische und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi III,' *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 17 [1974]: 109–25; Craig A. Evans, 'On the Prologue of John and the *Trimorphic Protennoia*,' *New Testament Studies* 27 [1981]: 395–401; Hans-Martin Schenke, 'The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism,' in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticute March 28–31, 1978*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 2 [Brill: Leiden, 1981] 588–616).

[54] Turner, 'Trimorphic Protennoia: Introduction,' 393.

Christologies (including the Johannine) and to convey a higher (Sethian) one.'[55]

At this point a brief note on Sethian gnosticism is in order. Some scholars believe that several documents from the Nag Hammadi Library form a category, are genealogically related, and produced by the same family of 'Sethian' communities.[56] Whether one considers them to be pre-Christian or non-Christian, Christianized, or post-Christian in their origins, they are at least regarded as loosely related in their doctrine, mythology, ritual, and liturgy.[57] Pearson describes Sethian gnosticism thusly:

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[55] Ibid., 400.

[56] The texts described as 'Sethian' usually include the following tractates: *Ap. John* (NHC II,*1*; III,*1*; IV,*1*; BG *2*; cf. Iren. *Haer.* I.29); *Hyp. Arch.* (NHC II,*4*); *Gos. Eg.* (NHC III,*2*; IV,*2*); *Apoc. Adam* (NHC V,*5*); *Steles Seth* (NHC VII,*5*); *Zost.* (NHC VIII,*1*); *Melch.* (NHC IX,*1*); *Norea* (NHC IX,*2*); *Marsanes* (NHC X,*1*); *Allogenes* (NHC XI,*3*); *Trim. Prot.* (NHC XIII,*1*); and Cod. Bruc. *Untitled.* (Schenke, 'The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism,' 588–89). See also Alastair H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), xv, xxii; Frederik Wisse, 'The Paraphrase of Shem: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 30, ed. James M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 21, n. 6. However, not all scholars agree that an actual group of 'Sethians' existed. I have decided, therefore, to treat these texts individually. See Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* (London: T. &. T. Clark, 2003), 97–100; Guy G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, Frederik Wisse, and James M. Robinson, vol. 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 7–13.

[57] Pearson argues for at least non-Christian, if not pre-Christian origins for Sethian gnosticism in (Birger A. Pearson, 'Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of Gnostic Self-Definition,' in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, ed. E. P. Sanders [London: SCM Press, 1980], 152–54). Also see Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy*, xvii–xviii. For challenges to the notion of pre-Christian gnosticism, see Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990); Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences*, 2nd ed.

> In broad terms the Sethian-gnostic 'system' includes the
> following elements: the figure of Seth, son of Adam, who
> functions both as a heavenly being and as a savior, and whose
> spiritual descendants constitue the gnostic elect; a primordial
> divine triad of Father, Mother, and Son; four 'luminaries'
> (φωστῆρες: Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithe, and Eleleth), and
> other angelic beings subordinate to them; and an apocalyptic
> schematization of history. … The Sethian system also includes
> a Sophia ('Wisdom') figure, but she occurs in numerous other
> gnostic systems as well.[58]

In *Trimorphic Protennoia*, we find several indications of a high
christology.[59] For example, in 38,22–29: 'They blessed the Perfect
Son, the Christ, the only-begotten God. And they gave glory
saying: "He is! He is! The Son of God! The Son of God! It is he
who is! The Aeon of Aeons beholding the Aeons which he begot!
For thou hast begotten by thine own desire! Therefore [we] glorify
thee."' Yet in *Trimorphic Protennoia*, 'Jesus is only one of many
manifestation of a revealing power, an illuminating *dynamis*, a
soteric entity whose names can change, whose epiphanies can
vary.'[60] Thus, in 49,6–20, we read,

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983).

[58] Birger A. Pearson, 'Introduction to X,*1*: Marsanes,' in *Nag
Hammadi Codices IX and X*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi Studies,
ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 15
(Leiden: Brill, 1981), 241.

[59] These may, however, be later Christian gnostic interpolations
added to an earlier non-Christian text. See Turner, 'Trimorphic
Protennoia: Introduction,' 380–81.

[60] Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 116. Regarding Sethian
mythologies, which he regarded as materials that arose outside
Christianity, Filoramo notes, 'If there has been Christian influence, the
meeting with the figure of the Christian Saviour seems to have provided
an opportunity to add one more name to the list of soteric manifestations.
Thus, the celestial Christ, his pleromatic prototype, has been
superimposed on the earthly Jesus' (Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 116).

'[I was] dwelling in them [in the form of each] one. [The Archons] thought [that I] was their Christ. Indeed I [dwell in] everyone. Indeed within those in whom [I revealed myself] as Light [I eluded] the Archons. I am their beloved, [for] in that place I clothed myself [as] the Son of the Archigenetor. … among the Sons of Man as if I were a Son of Man, even though I am Father of everyone.'[61]

Luttikhuizen notes, 'Apparently their "high Christology" brought them into conflict with Christians who believed that Christ had humbled himself to the level of a human being and that his death on a cross had effected redemption.'[62] *Trimorphic Protennoia* offers early evidence of a possible polemical non-catholic reinterpretations of the incarnational narrative.[63]

Acts of John. Lalleman dates the final composition of *Acts of John* in the middle of the second century.[64] The 'passion narrative'

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[61] On this passage, Janssens notes, 'The Docetism of the author is plain' (Janssens, 'The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Fourth Gospel,' 241), and Franzmann notes, 'Even putting on the human garment of the flesh cannot in any way be considered as a real dwelling in the flesh, or taking on of real humanity, or taking up residence as a human being in the world. In fact the text warns that those who propose to recognise the Logos in these various clothings are in error (49.7–8)' (Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 74).

[62] Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 161.

[63] See Jan Helderman, '"In ihren Zelten …": Bemerkungen bei Condex XIII Nag Hammadi p. 47:14–18, im Hinblick auf Joh i 14, ' in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica*, ed. T. Baarda (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 181–211; Pheme Perkins, 'Logos Christologies in the Nag Hammadi Codices,' *Vigiliae christianae* 35 (1981): 382.

[64] Pieter J. Lalleman, *The Acts of John: A Two-Stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 69–152. Schäferdieck, however, dates the text in the first half of the third century (Knut Schäferdiek, 'The Acts of John,' in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson, trans. R. McL. Wilson, vol. 2, *Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects* [Louisville:

section of the *Acts of John* found in chapters 94–102, regarded by most scholars as 'gnostic,' discusses and reinterprets the crux of the catholic incarnational narrative.[65] Indeed, the text exhibits gnostic tendencies, such as the separation of the divine Christ from suffering. Regarding the great song and dance rite in 94–96, Luttikhuizen writes: 'The main theme of these enigmatic instructions is the suffering/non-suffering of the divine Lord and the believers. … The believers suffer because they still live in the lower world, while the Lord suffers because spiritual humankind has not yet ascended and united with him.'[66]

The *Acts of John* portrays the spiritual Savior and the physical suffering man on the cross as distinct entities.[67] Junod and Kaestli note: 'Le Christ est totalement étranger aux souffrances concretes du Calvaire.'[68] Indeed, while Jesus is suffering crucifixion, John carries on a conversation with him, in which Jesus says, 'John, for the people below in Jerusalem I am being crucified and pierced with lances and reeds and given vinegar and gall to drink. But to you I am speaking' (*Acts John* 97).[69] The *Acts of John* also presents the docetic phenomenon of polymorphy (*Acts John* 88–93). Papandrea summarizes the image of Christ in the *Acts of John* well:

> Jesus is not only intangible but also sometimes invisible. On the other hand, he can be tangible when he wants to be, and then sometimes his body feels soft and at other times hard. But this does not imply a hybrid christology because his 'body' is said to be 'immaterial substance.' Here the tangibility itself is

Westminster/John Knox, 1992], 166–67). And Junod and Kaestli place it in the second half of the second century (Eric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Acta Johannis: Textus alii, Commentarius, Indices* Corpus christianorum, Series apocryphorum, vol. 2 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1983], 694–95).

[65] Lalleman, *The Acts of John*, 50.

[66] Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 144.

[67] See a similar account in *Apoc. Pet.* below, pp. 352–355.

[68] Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Johannis*, 600.

[69] The English translation is that of Schäferdiek, 'The Acts of John,' 152–212.

an illusion—he is not tangible by nature; he is immaterial, incorporeal. Sometimes he appears small, at other times very large. He is described as 'not having any shape.' His eyes never blink. When he walks he leaves no footprints.[70]

Though the ability of Christ to change forms is not exclusively associated with docetism, as Origen suggested that Christ's appearance differed depending on the abilities of spiritual perception on the part of those encountering him (*Contra Celsum* 2.64), Lalleman points out that whereas polymorphy may be seen in the apocryphal acts of the apostles, the *Acts of John* 'are unique in describing polymorphic appearances of the Lord before his resurrection.'[71] He concludes, 'The text … emphatically denies his humanity.'[72]

EARLY TESTIMONY: SECONDARY EVIDENCE

In addition to the previous works regarded as possibly originating early in the second century and containing substantial christological content, the following texts are also regarded as likely early, though their christological content is not as explicit.

Sophia of Jesus Christ (NHC III,4 and BG 8502). This text, which placed the words of the earlier *Eugnostos the Blessed* (III,*3* and V,*1*) on the lips of Jesus, is often dated early in the second century.[73] The Savior is presented as the revealer of knowledge

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[70] James L. Papandrea, *The Earliest Christologies: Five Images of Christ in the Postapostolic Age* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 55–56.

[71] Pieter J. Lalleman, 'Polymorphy of Christ,' in *The Apocryphal Acts of John*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 98.

[72] Lalleman, *The Acts of John*, 208. For a detailed discussion of the christology of *Acts John* see Lalleman, *The Acts of John*, 153–215. The non-incarnational christology of *Acts John* is so clear that a full presentation of its content is unnecessary here.

[73] This date seems a bit early to me, considering that the text has Bartholomew asking Jesus, 'How (is it that) <he> was designated in the Gospel "Man" and "Son of Man"' (103,22–104,2). If 'Gospel' refers to a written text, then *Soph. Jes. Chr.* may rather be dated in the middle or second half of the second century. However, if the term refers to the

from the spiritual realm, striking several distinctions between his true immortal nature and that of his foreign physical environment. For example, in 93,8–24, we read the follow account which seems to preclude a real fleshly incarnation by human birth:

> 'But I, who came from Infinite Light, I am here … that I might speak to you about the precise nature of the truth. For whatever is from itself is a polluted life; it is self-made. Providence has no wisdom in it. And fate does not discern. But to you it is given to know; and whoever is worthy of knowledge will receive (it), whoever has not been begotten by the sowing of unclean rubbing but by First Who Was Sent, for he is an immortal in the midst of moral men.'

He is not immortality who became mortal, spiritual who took on flesh, but 'an immortal in the midst of mortal man.' The *Sophia of Jesus Christ* states at the outset that Jesus Christ 'rose from the dead' (III,*4* 90,15), but 'the Savior appeared, not in his previous form (ⲘⲞⲢⲪⲎ), but in the invisible spirit. And his likeness resembles a great angel of light. But his resemblance I must not describe. No mortal flesh could endure it' (91,10–16).[74]

Though Rudolph believed that in *Sophia of Jesus Christ* 'Christ has only secondarily been built into the context,'[75] my own reading of the text suggests the opposite—that the author of *Sophia of Jesus Christ* actually pulled excerpts from the non-Christian *Eugnostos* and attempted to Christianize it. This is supported by the fact that the editor of *Sophia of Jesus Christ* is selective in his or her excerpts from *Eugnostos*, adding much new material to the pseudo-dialogue. However, if Christianization is occurring, it is a non-incarnational Christianization outside the incarnational norms of catholic Christian identity.

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narratives of about Christ, as in Ignatius of Antioch's use of εὐαγγέλιον, then an early second century date would fit the evidence.

[74] See Craig A. Evans, 'Jesus in Gnostic Literature,' *Biblica* 62 (1981): 408.

[75] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 148.

Dialogue of the Savior (NHC III,5). This writing is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus, often in the form of a dialogue between his disciples, primarily Judas, Matthew, and Mary. The redacted form of the text found in NHC III is dated by Koester and Pagels in the early decades of the second century, with dialogue traditions dating from the late first century.[76] Franzmann has suggested that *Dialogue of the Savior* 'is the simplest example of those texts in which the Jesus figure is not equivalent to the Logos.'[77] Such a position is debatable and seems to rest on an argument from silence, as the 'Lord' of the dialogue and the Logos are never explicitly equated. However, the Logos 'comes forth in [the body] of the Father among men' (133,18–19). Though Jesus is presented as speaking these words, he could be referring to himself in the third person.

Though the *Dialogue of the Savior* does not contain a narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, certain elements may be implied by some of the sayings. Thus, for example, an other-worldly origin and descent of the Savior may be implied at *Dialogue of the Savior* 1 (120,23): 'But when I came.'[78] Also, in the Savior's instruction on prayer reminiscent of the canonical 'Lord's Prayer,' the Savior instructs his disciples to pray, 'Through your sacrifice, [these] will enter by means of their good works' (*Dial. Sav.* 2 [121,20–22]).[79] Though the praise addresses the Father, the prayer

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[76] Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels, 'The Dialogue of the Savior: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior*, ed. Stephen Emmel, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 15–16.

[77] Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 34.

[78] Because the sayings of *Dial. Sav.* are of varying lengths, I am using both numbered sayings and line citations from the actual codex. Though I have eliminated several bracketed words that are mostly intact in the manuscript, I have adapted the text from Stephen Emmel, Helmut Koester, and Elaine Pagels, eds, *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

[79] It is uncertain whether the text originally read 'these will enter' or 'you will enter,' though 'these' seems more likely, given the context of a

refers to 'your' sacrifice, which may allude to the Father's giving over of the Savior, but one cannot be certain. The prayer refers to the 'only-begotten son' (121,6–7), whom the Father 'received,' which may refer to the ascent of the Savior. Furthermore, we find indications in *Dialogue of the Savior* that a full incarnational narrative would not have found fertile ground in the community behind this text. Like many later gnostic writings, the tractate appears to disparage the flesh, seeing it as an obstacle that needs to be overcome or a burden that needs to be shed rather than something that will be resurrected or redeemed (*Dial. Sav.* 27–28 [132,5–12]; 84–85 [143,11–23]). So, although we do not find a clear polemical anti-incarnational narrative in *Dialogue of the Savior*, we do find dualistic concepts that would contradict the incarnational narrative.

Apocalypse of Adam (NHC V,5). Many regard *Apocalypse of Adam* as a non-Christianized Sethian gnostic text originating by the first half of the second century.[80] However, if *Apocalypse of Adam* is regarded as a Christian gnostic text, the absence of any kind of christological narrative indicates the non-christological orientation of its tradition.

Act of Peter (BG 8502, 4). Though this text may have originated by the mid-second century, it should probably be placed after 150 CE.[81] In any case, the text does not explicitly expose the author's

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prayer directed to the Father, in which the address seems to remain consistent throughout (see 121,5, 6, 16, 19, 20).

[80] Evans, 'Jesus in Gnostic Literature,' 410; Charles W. Hedrick, *The Apocalypse of Adam: A Literary and Source Analysis*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, ed. Howard Clark Kee, vol. 46 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980), 214; George W. MacRae, 'The Apocalypse of Adam: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 152.

[81] James Brashler and Douglas M. Parrott, 'The Act of Peter: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11

christology. Because of the reference to 'the Lord's day' as the first day of the week (128,1–2), one might suggest that the community held to the weekly commemoration of Christ's resurrection. However, *Act of Peter* may also have simply adopted Christian language without a Christian meaning.

(Leiden: Brill, 1979), 476.

CHAPTER 18. LATER NON-CATHOLIC TESTIMONY (C. 150–225)

The survey of non-catholic literature continues with writings that most likely came to form in the period immediately following the catholic Christian texts examined in chapters 3–15 and the non-catholic writings reviewed in chapter 17. These later writings are categorized as providing either 'primary evidence,' 'secondary evidence,' or 'tertiary evidence,' depending on the clarity and directness of christologically significant passages. This chapter will further demonstrate that the christologies of non-catholic Christianities were as essentially 'non-incarnational' or even 'anti-incarnational.' It will also begin to show some of the christological trajectories of these communities in the midst of their polemic with catholic Christianity. As with the early non-catholic testimony, implications will be addressed in chapter 19.

LATER TESTIMONY: PRIMARY EVIDENCE

The following texts are regarded by many as having been composed late in the second or early in the third centuries. As such, they are useful for pointing out a widespread trend in non-catholic groups that may have arisen earlier in the second century.

Prayer of the Apostle Paul (NHC I,1). Though the provenance of this text is unknown, Mueller notes that reference to the 'psychic God' (A.31) may mark this as a Valentinian work.[1] If this is the

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[1] Dieter Mueller, 'Prayer of the Apostle Paul: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 7.

case, the writing can be dated sometime between 150 and 300, though probably not any earlier. Christ is mentioned by the author several times with various names,[2] yet the fleshly manifestation, death, and resurrection are not mentioned at all in this prayer of praise, even though the author seems to have been familiar with the incarnational account in Paul's christological hymn of the kenosis in Phil 2.[3] However, the author does portray Paul requesting healing for his body, as well as redemption for his 'eternal light soul' and 'spirit' (A.19–23). In light of Valentinian soteriology, this final statement regarding the redemption of the soul and spirit suggests that the community behind *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* would have likely taken exception to an incarnational narrative that included a fleshly resurrection of Christ.

Tripartite Tractate (NHC I,5). One of the longest tractates in the Nag Hammadi library, *Tripartite Tractate* consists of three distinct parts—an account of the Father and his emanations (51,1–104,3), the creation of humanity (104,14–108,12), and the incarnation of the Savior (108,13–138,27). Attridge and Pagels reasonably date *Tripartite Tractate* in the first half of the third century or later.[4]

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[2] These titles include 'redeemer' (A.4), 'Jesus Christ' (A.13), 'Lord of Lords' (A.14), 'King of the ages' (A.14), 'Son of Man' (A.16), 'the Spirit' (A.17), 'Paraclete of truth' (A.17–18), 'First-born of the Pleroma of grace' (A.24), 'First-born' (A.38), 'First-begotten' (A.38), and 'Christ' (B.10). Given the complexity of Valentinian emanations, these titles may not all refer to the same entity.

[3] The author of *Pr. Paul* says that the addressee 'pre-existed in the name which is exalted above every name, through Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords, the King of the ages' (A.12–14), a phrase which bears a resemblance to Phil 2:6–11.

[4] Harold W. Attridge and Elaine H. Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 178. See Jean-Daniel Dubois, 'Le Traité tripartite (Nag Hammadi I, 5) est-il antérieur à Origène?,' in *Origeniana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition, Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa,*

It may be that the text exhibits modifications of an earlier second century Valentinian system in response to catholic Christian polemics.[5] The text clearly asserts a fleshly incarnation with language reminiscent of catholic writers. Christ is the 'unbegotten, impassible one from the Logos, who came into being in flesh (ϩⲛ ⲥⲁⲣⲝ̄)' (113,37–38).[6] He 'let himself be conceived and born as an infant, in body and soul (ⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲙⲁ ϯⲩⲭⲏ)' (115,9–11),[7] and took on himself 'the death (ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲙⲟ) of those whom he thought to save' (115,4–6). Strangely, however, *Tripartite Tractate* is virtually silent on the question of the resurrection, neither condemning a fleshly concept, as in *Treatise on the Resurrection* (46,1–2), nor offering a reinterpretation of 'flesh' as a spiritual substance, as in *Gospel of Truth*.[8]

27–31 August 2001, ed. L. Perrone, P. Bernardino, and D. Marchini, vol. 1, Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium, vol. 164 (Leuven: University Press, 2003), 314–15.

[5] Attridge and Pagels note: 'The author's account of the reality of the incarnation is quite emphatic. … Our author approximates later orthodox Christology more closely than the followers of Ptolemy as described by Irenaeus' ('The Tripartite Tractate: Introduction,' 186).

[6] See Harold W. Attridge and Elaine H. Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: Notes,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex) Notes*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 433, 435.

[7] Attridge and Pagels note, 'This doctrine marks a departure from any Valentinian systems known until now' (ibid., 437). Yet the opposite conclusion is drawn by Franzmann: 'His flesh is from "all of them" but above all from the spiritual Logos (114.4–7). The Logos conceives the flesh of the Saviour when the Saviour/Light reveals himself to the Logos (114.10–14). Thus the flesh of the Saviour is spiritual and he does not share in the passions of human flesh (116.26–28), even though the text asserts that he let himself be conceived and born as an infant in body and soul (115.9–11)' (Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1996], 78). Though it would strengthen the evidence for my thesis, I cannot agree with Franzmann's interpretation here, as the statement of the conception and birth in 115.9–11 does not appear to assert anything less than a real dwelling in the flesh.

[8] The one possible mention of a resurrection in 133,16–134,1 really

Attridge and Pagels suggest that '*Tri. Trac.* offers important evidence for the development of at least one branch of Western Valentinian theology as it increasingly accommodated to orthodox Christianity.'[9] Given its likely third century date, *Tripartite Tractate* can only be used as an indication of the character of non-catholic Christianity in the early third century. Thus, we find that its apparent accommodations to the catholic christology affects several areas for which late second century fathers crafted powerful criticisms.

First Apocalypse of James (NHC V,3 and Codex Tchacos 2).

This tractate is dated after the rise of Valentinianism, perhaps in the late second or early third century.[10] Several elements suggest a modification of the catholic emphasis on the incarnational narrative. In 27.5–10, Christ tells James to get rid of the 'bond of flesh' that encircles him in order to read 'Him-who-is.'[11] And in

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only mentions the tomb: 'About the <one> who appeared in flesh they believed without any doubt that he is the Son of the unknown God, who was not previously spoken of and who could not be seen. They abandoned their gods whom they had previously worshipped and the lords who are in heaven and on earth. Before he had taken them up, and while he was still a child, they testified that the had already begun to preach, and when he was in the tomb as a dead man the [angels] thought that he was alive, [receiving] life from the one who had died.'

[9] Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: Introduction,' 189. However, see criticisms of this view in Dubois, 'Le Traité tripartite,' 304–10.

[10] William R. Schoedel, 'The (First) Apocalypse of James: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 67. On the question of the writing's relationship to Valentinianism, see Einar Thomassen, 'The Valentinian Materials in *James* (NHC V,*3* and CT,*2*),' in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi, Lance Jenott, Nicola Denzey Lewis, and Philippa Townsend, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, vol. 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 79–90.

[11] See Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and*

First Apocalypse of James 31,15–22, the Lord says: 'James, do not be concerned for me or for this people. I am he who was within me. Never have I suffered in any way, nor have I been distressed. And this people has done me no harm.' Stroumsa regards this as a primary docetic passage.[12] Indeed, given the context and general disdain for the material and fleshly in this writing, such an interpretation of the language seems reasonable.

Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles (NHC VI,1). If this document was originally an introduction to the apocryphal *Act of Peter*, the book can be dated in the last half of the second century.[13] Parrott notes that 'there is little here that would have offended developing orthodoxy' and points out that 'the Christology is that of the divine sonship (6,14–19; 9,11–12), and, although the crucifixion and death of Jesus are not mentioned in the extant text, they may well be implied,' referring to 2,14.[14] One might argue, however, that the various metamorphoses of Christ as Lithargoel and the Physician may be an indication that the christology behind the text did not regard the resurrection of Christ to have been fleshly, but rather spiritual. The narrator (Peter) says that when he encountered Lithargoel in the city, he could see four parts of his body: 'the soles of his feet and a part of his chest and the palms of his hands and his visage' (2,21–24). Interestingly, these are all parts of the body of Jesus that were marred by the passion and crucifixion and by which he was identified in the canonical gospels

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Early Jesus Traditions, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, ed. Stephen Emmel and Johannes van Oort, vol. 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 109.

[12] Guy G. Stroumsa, 'Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004): 272. See also Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. P. W. Coxon, K. H. Kuhn, and R. McL. Wilson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984), 167–68.

[13] R. McL. Wilson and Douglas M. Parrott, 'The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 202.

[14] Ibid.

as the crucified one—nail scars in the hands and feet and the spear wound below his chest (Luke 24:39–40; John 19:2–3; 20:25–27). The narrative says that even though Peter had seen these parts of Lithargoel's body, nothing about them suggested that he was the Christ, a discovery made only after Jesus revealed himself (9,14–19).[15] In light of the catholic insistence on the visibility of the marks as signs of physical resurrection, *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* may suggest a discontinuity between the crucified and resurrected body.

Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3). Scholars agree that this writing cannot be dated earlier than the end of the second century.[16] Koschorke places the date of its composition in the

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[15] I find Schenke's view that Lithargoel did, in fact, retain the marks of the crucifixion to be rather puzzling. He bases this on the fact that the pearl seller described in 2,10–17 was wearing a cloth around his waist with a belt, and a napkin on his chest and shoulders, covering his hands—dressed, as it is, as a 'Begrabenen.' Schenke then suggests that the parts of the body that had been inflicted by wounds were exposed, 'daß man die Wunden des Gekreuzigten sehen können soll' (Hans-Martin Schenke, '"Die Taten des Petrus und der zwölf Apostle": Die erste Schrift aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex VI,' *Theologische Litteraturzeitung* 98 [1973]: 14). Yet the text clearly indicates that, even though Peter 'was able to see' these things, he mistook the man for a resident of the city (2,32–34). The point of the passage rather seems to be that even though Peter could see the parts that had been wounded, the resurrected Jesus could disguise himself precisely by making the marks invisible in plain sight. In Lk 24:16, Jesus walks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, but 'their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.' This does not appear to be a case of polymorphy, but a subjective inability of the disciples to recognize the Lord. Similarly, in Jn 20:15, Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus for the gardener, but within seconds she recognizes him as the Lord (20:16). In neither case do we have an assertion that Jesus changed forms.

[16] Michel Desjardins, 'Apocalypse of Peter: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 30, ed. James M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 214; Henriette W. Havelaar, ed., *The Coptic Apocalypse of Peter (Nag Hammadi Codex VII,3)*, Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. 144

middle of the third.[17] The main docetic text touching on the passion of Jesus is found in 81,3–21, which undoubtedly falls into the category of the passion abandonment accounts, in which the true spirit of Christ departs from the physical Jesus (see 82,3–83,15).[18] Yet the christology of *Apocalypse of Peter* appears to be even more complex than simply two divided natures. The *Apocalypse of Peter* seems to present the impassible Christ as having two higher forms, the incorporeal 'living Saviour' and 'the intellectual Pleroma,' rightly relating this trichotomous view to the three substances that compose human beings—the lowest earthly, physical Jesus, the psychic body, which clothed the innermost spirit or rational part of the soul.[19] Besides the rejection of suffering, *Apocalypse of Peter* also reinterprets the catholic concept of the resurrection. Christ is not portrayed as rising from the dead in the physical body that was buried, but 'it is interpreted in gnostic terms as a reunification of the spiritual body of Jesus with the intellectual light of the heavenly pleroma.'[20]

(Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 16.

[17] Koschorke points to the text's exegesis of Matthew's Gospel, the nature of the polemic against the catholics (especially the bishops), the attack on the view of repentance in the *Shepherd* and the ensuing controversy regarding repentance involving Montanists, and the rise of the episcopacy's influence on the masses. See Klaus Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Nag-Hammadi-Traktate 'Apokalypse des Petrus' (NHC VII,3) und 'Testimonium Veritatis' (NHC IX,3)* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 17. Also see Pheme Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Paulist, 1980), 194–95.

[18] See Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 76–77; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 134; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 168–69; and Stroumsa, 'Christ's Laughter,' 272.

[19] Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum*, 21–25; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 135–36.

[20] James Brashler, 'Introduction to *Apocalypse of Peter* (VII, *3*),' in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 372.

While the *Apocalypse of Peter* offers a non-incarnational christological narrative as the revealed truth concerning the Saviour, it also launches an attack against 'heretics,' that is, the early catholic Christians.[21] The catholic belief 'in a dead man' (74,13–15) likely refers to the confession of the death of Christ as part of the incarnational narrative.[22] If faithfulness to the incarnational narrative formed the center of catholic Christian identity, then Christian gnostics who sought to establish their distinct identities while retaining the name 'Christian' would direct their critiques toward the central incarnational mark of catholic Christianity. I thus regard this unique center of catholic teaching to be the 'error' into which the 'heretics' were to fall according *Apocalypse of Peter* 74,17. This error leads catholic Christians to 'blaspheme the truth and proclaim evil teaching' (74,23–25). These opponents also 'speak of things which they do not understand' and boast 'that the mystery of the truth is theirs alone' (76,29–34). They 'oppose the truth and are the messengers of error' (77,23–25). The writer of *Apocalypse of Peter* also complains that the catholics believe in one God, the creator of all things (77,20–22), advocate martyrdom (78,1–2, 31–33),[23] and propagate their false doctrines by bishop

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[21] Koschorke notes, 'War für Häretiker sind es nun, durch deren Ankündigung der Soter den Ptr in Furcht versetzt? Trotz der Gliederung in "Einige … Einige … Andere …" etc—ein wohl nur stilistisches Darstellungsmittel—ist eine *einheitliche Fronstellung* [sic] gegeben, und zwar *gegen das katholische Christentum*' (Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum*, 14).

[22] See similar polemic against catholic Christians in *Treat. Seth* (NHC VII,*2* 60,22). Given the description of the non-incarnational narrative of *Apoc. Pet.*, which involves the suffering and death of the physical Jesus rather than the spiritual Savior, we must conclude that the objectionable issue was not Jesus's suffering and death, but the suffering and death of the incarnate Son of God. On the distinction between the 'dead man' (Jesus) in 74,14 and the 'dead man' (Hermas) in 78,18, see ibid., 38.

[23] It is to martyrdom that the author refers when he complains of the catholic claim, 'Through this our God has pity, since salvation comes to us through this' (79.13–16). See clarifying statements at 78.1–2; 78.31–79.10. Thus, I believe Luttikhuizen misreads this passage as referring

and deacons (79,22–27).[24] And with regard to its use of New Testament writings, we see evidence of an anti-incarnational hermeneutic applied to the early incarnational narratival traditions and texts according to a typical gnostic docetic framework. Desjardins notes the author's non-incarnational hermeneutic applied to New Testament books: 'He shows an awareness of several of its books, skillfully adapting New Testament passages to his own narrative.'[25]

Letter of Peter to Philip (NHC VIII,2 and Codex Tchacos 1).

Scholars believe the original Greek text of the Coptic tractate was written during the late second or early third centuries.[26] Though agreeing with catholic christology in many respects,[27] it nevertheless differs from a full incarnational narrative. The text calls Christ 'our God Jesus' (NHC VIII, *2* 133,7) and reflects on

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explicitly to the death of Christ (Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 136). However, we have seen in earlier chapters that martyrdom as imitation of Christ does memorialize and, in a sense, retell the passion elements of the incarnational narrative.

[24] It must be noted that the polemic of *Apoc. Peter* is not simply against hierarchy, but against the effects of believing the teaching of these leaders (79.32–80.7). For a detailed discussion of the polemic against the incarnational narrative, see the excursus, 'Gnostische Polemik gegen die Verkündigung des Gekreuzigten,' in Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum*, 44–48.

[25] Desjardins, 'Apocalypse of Peter: Introduction,' 210. Also see Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 139.

[26] Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 3; Marvin W. Meyer, 'Letter of Peter to Philip: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. John H. Sieber, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 231.

[27] See Antti Marjanen, 'The Suffering of One Who Is a Stranger to Suffering: The Crucifixion of Jesus in the Letter of Peter to Philip,' in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Keikki Räisänen*, ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 103 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 490–498.

the time 'when he was in the body' (133,17; cf. 136,16–22; 138,3; 139,11).[28] The author recites the basic events of his version of the christological narrative: 'Our illuminator, Jesus, [came] down and was crucified. And he bore a crown of thorns. And he put on a purple garment. And he was [crucified] on a tree and he was buried in a tomb. And he rose from the dead. My brothers, Jesus is a stranger to this suffering' (139,15–22).[29] Regarding this brief narrative synopsis, Meyer writes, 'The traditional kerygmatic formulae in the credo (139,15–21) show affinities with similar formulae to be found throughout early Christian literature.'[30]

However, the *Letter of Peter to Philip* also asserts that Christ was only 'in the body' prior to his departure (133, 17; 138,3; 139,11), implying that at the resurrection or ascension he shed the bodily form.[31] This would perhaps explain why the resurrected Christ

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[28] Marjanen is correct that this language could be understood as 'a sort of incarnation,' not necessarily dyophysite docetic christology (Marjanen, 'The Suffering of One Who Is a Stranger to Suffering,' 492). However, her study emphasizes only the 'incarnation' and 'passion' aspects of the christological narrative; it does not address the resurrection and ascension aspects of the narrative, which are not as easily interpreted in light of a full incarnational narrative.

[29] Though some take the last phrase, 'Jesus is a stranger to this suffering' as indicating that he did not truly suffer, this is not a necessary reading. Franzmann notes, 'Is it impossible for the Christ to suffer really, despite how it seems with his crucifixion, because he is a stranger to suffering? Or has he suffered really, despite the fact that he should not, because he came and took on our bodily condition and suffered the consequences?' (Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 138). The latter seems to most simply fit the text, as no other indications of a separation from suffering can be found.

[30] Meyer, 'Letter of Peter to Philip: Introduction,' 229.

[31] See Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, trans. Anthony Alcock (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 126; Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, 4; James M. Robinson, 'Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (or To the Apostles' Creed),' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 10–11.

took the form of a great light and voice (134,9–14; 135,3–4).[32] The text also portrays rescue from the mortal body as the soteriological hope for humanity: 'When you strip off from yourselves what is corrupted, then you will become illuminators in the midst of mortal men' (137,6–9). Thus, although the *Letter of Peter to Philip* contains traditional gospel terms used to describe the events of Christ's earthly life, death, and resurrection, 'the credo is interpreted according to the Gnostic Christian theology of the author'[33]—at least by the time the narrative reaches the end of the story.

Melchizedek (NHC IX,1). Pearson guesses that the date of *Melchizedek* lands somewhere around the late second or early third century.[34] He reasonably associates the writing with the Melchizedekians mentioned by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 55.5–9).[35] In this context Epiphanius mentioned that the Melchizedekians rejected the virgin birth (55.9.2). We actually see a possible assertion of just such a 'low christology' in *Melchizedek* 5,2–11 in the pseudo-prophetic polemic against docetism:

> They will say of him that he is unbegotten though he has been begotten, (that) he does not eat even though he eats, (that) he does not drink even though he drinks, (that) he is uncircumcised though he has been circumcised, (that) he is

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[32] Though Christ had once been 'in the body' (133,16), at the time of the apostles' prayer they described him as having become 'an illuminator in the darkness' (133,27–134,1) and they prayed to the 'Son of Life, Son of Immortality, who is in the light' (134,2–6). This suggests that the post-resurrection Christ had transcended his former human bodily existence.

[33] Meyer, 'Letter of Peter to Philip: Introduction,' 231.

[34] Birger A. Pearson, 'Introduction to IX,*1*: Melchizedek,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 40.

[35] See Birger A. Pearson, 'Anti-Heretical Warnings in Codex IX from Nag Hammadi,' in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. Martin Krause, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 149–50.

> unfleshly though he has come in flesh (ϨⲚ ⲤⲀⲢⳠ), (that) he did not come to suffering, <though> he came to suffering, (that) he did not rise from the dead <though> he arose from [the] dead.

If we are reading this statement correctly, the false teachers against whom Melchizedek argues were asserting that Christ was unbegotten, did not eat or drink, was uncircumcised, unfleshly, did not suffer, and did not rise from the dead. On the other hand, the correct view—apparently advocated by *Melchizedek*—was that Christ was born, ate and drank, was circumcised, had a fleshly body, suffered, and rose from the dead.[36]

Pearson suggests that the actual concept of Christ in *Melchizedek* aligns with early heresiological reports regarding the Melchizedekians' belief that Christ was a mere human born of Mary in contrast to the heavenly power Melchizedek.[37] By the time this book was written, some groups were responding not only to catholic Christians, but also to extreme monophysite docetism. The possible anti-docetic polemic may be an attempt to remove a clear obstacle from the path of potential converts from catholic Christianity.[38] Yet the text also serves as a vehicle for modifications in christology that move *Melchizedek* away from a full incarnational narrative. The apparent identification of the future Jesus with Melchizedek himself in 18–27 would distort the incarnational narrative beyond the threshold of what most catholic Christian teachers would accept.

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[36] Franzmann notes, however, 'What is not clear is whether we are to make the link between the earthly Jesus and the heavenly Jesus Christ or whether these are two figures who must be differentiated; that is, the Saviour Jesus who really suffers as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly Christ who does not suffer' (Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 84).

[37] Pearson, 'Anti-Heretical Warnings in Codex IX from Nag Hammadi,' 149–50. See Pearson, 'Introduction: Melchizedek,' 34; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 161–62.

[38] A similar hypothesis of a chastened Gnosticism is advanced by Pagels and Attrdige in their treatment of *Tri. Trac* (Attridge and Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: Introduction,' 189).

Testimony of Truth (NHC IX,3). Because of the polemical stance taken by *Testimony of Truth* against both catholic Christians and Valentinians, Pearson dates this final tractate of codex IX to the late second or early third century.[39] Regardless of its date, the text itself engages in a polemical argument against catholic Christians on a number of points, many of which target the incarnational narrative. The text appears to agree with the catholic concept of the virgin birth, by which Christ takes flesh (39,29–31; cf. 45,9–18)—though Christ merely 'passed through' Mary's womb (45,15).[40] Earlier in the tractate we read the following description: 'But the Son of Man [came] forth from Imperishability, [being] alien to defilement. He came [to the] world by the Jordan river, and immediately the Jordan [turned] back. And John bore witness to the [descent] of Jesus. For it is he who saw the [power] which came down upon the Jordan river' (30,18–28). The key to understanding the link between the entrance of Christ into the world by a virgin birth and at by baptism may be to affirm that he was born in the world and 'born again' at the Jordan, which becomes a basis for the believer's 'rebirth' (39,26–40,7).[41]

Yet the analogies with the catholic understanding of the incarnational narrative break down. According to *Testimony of Truth*, catholic Christians simply do not know who Christ is (32,1–2). The polemic against the catholic value on martyrdom is based on the assumption that God does not desire human sacrifice (32,19–21). In the cases of both Ignatius and Polycarp, martyrdom was seen as an imitation of the work of Christ—because he suffered in the flesh, so would his followers.[42] Even more central to the

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[39] Birger A. Pearson, 'Introduction to IX,*3*: The Testimony of Truth,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 118, 120.

[40] Franzmann understands this to mean, 'Jesus merely passes through the virgin Mary, by which action one assumes that nothing of her human nature really affects him' (Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 54).

[41] See Franzmann's possible solutions to the problem in ibid., 52–55.

[42] See above, pp. 121–122 and 211.

incarnational narrative, we read, '[Do not] expect, therefore, [the] carnal resurrection ([Ⲛ̄ⲦⲀⲚⲀⲤ]ⲦⲀⲤⲓⲤ Ⲛ̄ⲤⲀⲢⲔⲓⲔⲎ), which [is] destruction' (NHC IX,*3* 36,29–30).[43] Koschorke notes that according to *Testimony of Truth*, 'Kirchliche Erwartung einer '*Fleischesauferstehung*' ist sinnlos.'[44] Though Pearson shows that the christological understanding of the *Testimony of Truth* is 'largely based on Johannine ideas,' these are limited primarily to the pre-earthly heavenly existence and coming to earth. The full incarnational narrative celebrated among catholic Christians is explicitly rejected by *Testimony of Truth*.

A Valentinian Exposition (NHC XI,2)*.* As an exposition of the western Valentinian system, this tractate—with its liturgical supplements—cannot be dated earlier than the second half of the second century.[45] Concerning the Son, the text notes, '… whose alone is the fullness of divinity. He willed within himself bodily (ⲤⲰⲘⲀⲦⲓⲔⲰⲤ) to leave the powers and he descended' (33,31–34). A distinction of identity, however, may be made between the heavenly Christ and the earthly Jesus (39,15–24).[46]

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[43] Birger A. Pearson, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex IX and X*, Nag Hammadi Studies, vol. 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 136–37. This is a thought similar to that found in the *Treat. Res.* 45.29–46.2. See Pearson, 'Anti-Heretical Warnings in Codex IX from Nag Hammadi,' 152; Malcolm L. Peel, 'The Treatise on the Resurrection: Notes,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex) Notes*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 166.

[44] Klaus Koschorke, 'Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum,' in *Gnosis and Gnosticism: Papers Read at the Seventh International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, September 8th–13th 1975)*, ed. Martin Krause, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 46.

[45] Elaine H. Pagels, 'A Valentinian Exposition: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 89–91.

[46] See Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 32–33. See also discussion of the difficult passage in Dietrich Voorgang, *Die Passion Jesu*

Gospel of Judas (Codex Tchacos 3 33,1–58,28).[47] In *Adversus haereses* 1.31.1, Irenaeus mentioned the existence of a 'Gospel of Judas' used by gnostics called 'Cainites,' and there is no reason to doubt that the Tchacos Codex contains a version of the mid-second century text referred to by Irenaeus.[48] It is clear that the community in which the *Gospel of Judas* was written and edited knew of the gospel accounts, especially the accounts that portrayed Judas as the devil-inspired enemy of Christ. The polemic against the catholics' negative view of Judas makes this apparent (*Gos. Judas* 46,14–47,1). Yet *Gospel of Judas* turns this image around, making Judas—not Peter—the vessel of the true confession of Jesus's person. The disciples confess that Jesus is the son of their god in the context of eucharistic worship (*Gos. Judas* 33,26–34,12), echoing Peter's confession in Matthew 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–30; and Luke 9:18–21.

In Jesus's laughter at the prayer and worship of the disciples described in *Gospel of Judas* 33,22–34,3, we catch a glimpse of the community's polemical caricature of catholic worship. They are seen gathering together and seated for training, offering a prayer of thanksgiving over bread (ⲉⲩⲭⲁⲣⲓⲥⲧⲓ ⲉⲭⲛ ⲡⲁⲣⲧⲟⲥ, 34,1–2)—a sure indication of eucharistic worship which for catholic Christians portrayed not only the person of Christ with a body of flesh and blood, but also his real death for the forgiveness of sins. The fact that 34,2 portrays Jesus laughing at this ritual may indicate a mockery not only of the act, but also of its meaning. The disciples had been tricked into this type of carnal worship so that their god—the creator god of the world—would be praised (34,6–11).

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und Christi in der Gnosis, European University Studies, series 23: Theology, vol. 432 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1991), 231–34.

[47] English and Coptic texts are from Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst, eds, *The Gospel of Judas, Critical Edition: Together with the Letter of Peter to Phillip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2007).

[48] Gregor Wurst, 'Gospel of Judas: Introduction,' in *The Gospel of Judas together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos, Critical Edition*, ed. Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst (Washington: National Geographic, 2007), 178.

The disciples respond that Jesus is the son of their god—that is, the creator God (34,11–12). However, Jesus rejects such a notion, severing himself from all association with not only the eucharistic worship, but also the creator God (34,13–22).

Beyond this, *Gospel of Judas* differs from one of the first points of the incarnational narrative, the sending of the Son by the Father. Rather, Judas confesses, 'You have come from the immortal aeon of Barbelo. And I am not worthy to utter the name of the one who has sent you' (*Gos. Judas* 35,17–21). Thus, *Gospel of Judas* corrects the catholic incarnational narrative at its starting point—the Son was sent not by the creator God who made the material world, but by Barbelo. Regardless of whether the *Gospel of Judas* sought to rehabilitate Judas Iscariot,[49] the death of Jesus is seen as the positive means Jesus chose to be freed from the human flesh that clothed him: 'But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man who bears me' (*Gos. Judas* 56,17–20).[50] This corresponds with the gnostic desire to be freed from the bonds of the flesh.[51]

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[49] See the challenge to the 'reformed Judas' view in April D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Gospel: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

[50] The editors of the English translation note, 'Judas is instructed by Jesus to help him by sacrificing the fleshly body ("the man") that clothes or bears the true spiritual self of Jesus. The death of Jesus, with the assistance of Judas, is taken to be the liberation of the spiritual person within' (Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, eds, *The Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos* [Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006], 43, n. 137). Also see Marvin Meyer, 'Interpreting Judas: Ten Passages in the *Gospel of Judas*,' in *The Gospel of Judas in Context: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Gospel of Judas*, ed. Madeleine Scopello, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, ed. Stephen Emmel and Johannes van Oort, vol. 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 51–53. This interpretation is not universally accepted. Stephen Emmel, for example, notes, 'I am not convinced … that Jesus requires Judas's act in order for his spirit to be freed from the prison of his body' (Stephen Emmel, 'The Presuppositions and the Purpose of the *Gospel of Judas*,' in *The Gospel of Judas in Context: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Gospel of Judas*, ed. Madeleine Scopello, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, ed.

LATER TESTIMONY: SECONDARY EVIDENCE

Many documents dated by scholars from the late second or early third century appear to be either non-Christian texts, or 'Christianized' gnostic texts that may have a redeemer figure or figures but do not clearly address christological issues. It is, however, important to include such texts as they represent the kinds of non-catholic texts and traditions that grew out of the mid-second and late second century communities and demonstrate the non-incarnational trajectories of these groups.

Apocryphon of John (NHC II,1, III,1, IV,1, and BG 8502,2). The long and short forms of *Apocryphon of John* found in the three copies of the Nag Hammadi library and the Berlin manuscript, likely date from the late second or (more likely) early third centuries. Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 1.29) knew of at least a portion of this text, which indicates that an early edition was composed by about 180 CE, though many believe that it was later edited, the text available to Irenaeus becoming part of the versions available to us today.[52] The *Apocryphon of John* is one book in which Rudolph

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Stephen Emmel and Johannes van Oort, vol. 62 [Leiden: Brill, 2008], 38). However, Emmel's understanding of the matter is even less friendly to an incarnational interpretation of *Gos. Judas*: 'Jesus is already a remarkably "free spirit" throughout the *Gospel of Judas.* He comes and goes as he pleases, apparently dividing his time according to his own free choice between his disciples on earth and "some other great and holy generation" (ibid., 38).

[51] With regard ot the transfiguration scene in *Gos. Judas* 57,21–23 ('So Judas lifted up his eyes and saw the luminous cloud, and he entered it'), Marvin Meyer suggests that 'the antecedent of the pronominal subject … may well be Jesus' (Meyer, 'Interpreting Judas,' 53). In this case, 'If Jesus is the one who spiritually enters the light, it may be thought that in this way he leaves his body behind. Then Judas may hand the mortal body—the man who bears Jesus—over to the authorities, and the real Jesus may return to his heavenly home' (ibid., 53). I find this interpretation intriguing, though not compelling.

[52] See Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, eds, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2,*

believed 'Christ has only secondarily been built into the context.'[53] Here we find the phenomenon of the polymorphic Christ, who changes forms several times—a light, a youth, an old man, a servant (NHC II *1*, 1,31–2,5).[54] Though we see a motif of concealed identity in the catholic canonical texts (Lk 24:16; Jn 20:15) and symbolic representations in apocalyptic literature (Rev 1:13–16; 5:6), the ability of Christ to present himself in any form, or even non-form, is a mark of texts that propound a non-fleshly resurrection.[55]

As is typical of many Hermetic, Sethian, and Valentinian gnostic texts, *Apocryphon of John* sees salvation not as a resurrection and redemption of the fleshly body, but as an escape from the body. The body in *Apocryphon of John* is a 'tomb' with which 'the robbers had clothed the man, the bond of forgetfulness' (II,*1*

Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, ed. James M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit, vol. 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1. Based on his study of BG 8502,*2* early in the last century, Carl Schmidt argued that Irenaeus had a copy of *Ap. John* before him (Carl Schmidt, ‚Irenäus und seine Quelle in *Adv. haer.* I, 29,' in *Philotesia: Paul Kleinert zum LXX Geburtstag*, ed. Adolf von Harnack [Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1907], 317–19). By the middle of the century this was appropriately questioned, and a general consensus has since developed that regards the present form of *Ap. John* to be an edited text based partly on Irenaeus's earlier source. See W. C. van Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings: A Preliminary Survey of the Nag-Hammadi Find*, Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 30 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960), 71. This would place the current versions of the text in the last decade of the second century or first decades of the third. Also see discussion in Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 387–421.

[53] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 148. See also Sasagu Arai, 'Zur Christologie des Apokryphons des Johannes,' *New Testament Studies* 15 (1968/69): 302–18; Pheme Perkins, 'Logos Christologies in the Nag Hammadi Codices,' *Vigiliae christianae* 35 (1981): 380; Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings*, 76–79.

[54] See comments in Craig A. Evans, 'Jesus in Gnostic Literature,' *Biblica* 62 (1981): 408.

[55] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 157–58.

21.10–12), and a 'prison' or 'hades' (II,*1* 30,16–19; 26,22–27,20l 30,32–31,4). In fact, the text explicitly states that the soul 'is not again cast into another flesh' (27,20–21). In contrast, the catholic tradition of the resurrection, based as it is on its understanding of the resurrection of Jesus, taught a return of the immaterial part to a reconstituted and immortalized fleshly body.

The text also employs what I have called a non-incarnational hermeneutic. Thus we observe a reinterpretation of Christian writings in line with gnosticism: 'They are woven into an entirely different context of thought from that in which they occur in the New Testament. … Despite a veneer of biblical language, the "Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ" is replaced here by a totally different message.'[56]

Hypostasis of the Archons (NHC II,4). Bullard dates this writing in the third century CE, suggesting that it may have originated in Egypt.[57] This 'Sethian' gnostic text portrays the Revealer-Savior as Eleleth, 'the great angel, who stands in the presence of the holy spirit' (93,9–10), who was sent to reveal the origins of Norea. He is not the unique son of God, but 'one of the four light-givers, who stand in the presence of the great invisible spirit' (93,20–22).[58] Such non-catholic concepts must have originated in groups that had an independent and parallel development or had severed themselves from catholic groups. In any case, the communities behind writings like *Hypostasis of the Archons* had, by the time these texts were produced, already established their own identities free from the catholic insistence on faithfulness to the distinctly incarnational narrative.

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[56] Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings*, 77, 79.

[57] Roger A. Bullard, 'The Hypostasis of the Archons: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7, together with XIII,2, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 1, *Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 220–22.

[58] See Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 115.

Gospel of the Egyptians (NHC III,2 and IV,2). The editors of the Nag Hammadi Codices date *Gospel of the Egyptians*—at least in its Christianized version—in the second or third century.[59] Though acknowledging superficial Christianization, Evans regards this as a 'basically non-Christian tractate,' in which Christ appears in the background or was added to a completed Sethian text.[60] In fact, it is a Sethian gospel in which 'Seth's work of salvation in behalf of his children takes the central place.'[61] In any case, Jesus is described in *Gospel of the Egyptians* as 'Logos-begotten' (63,10–11; 64,1), on which Perkins comments, 'In so doing, it follows the general trend noted in Ireneus [sic] of avoiding statements that would have the Logos become incarnate directly.'[62]

Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2). The *Apocalypse of Paul* is regarded even by conservative estimates to be a document from the late second or early third century.[63] It does not contain anything like a coherent christological narrative, but one can find some language that would lead the reader to anti-incarnational conclusions. If the little child who meets Paul on the road is interpreted as an epiphany of Christ, we have an instance of polymorphy with regard to the resurrected Christ (18,3–19,20).[64] Also, when at the end of

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[59] Alexander Böhlig, Frederik Wisse, and Pahor Labib, eds, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2: The Gospel of the Egyptians*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 38.

[60] Evans, 'Jesus in Gnostic Literature,' 410. See Böhlig, Wisse, and Labib, ed., *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, 32–33.

[61] Ibid., 32.

[62] Perkins, 'Logos Christologies in the Nag Hammadi Codices,' 380.

[63] See Michael Kaler, Louis Painchaud, and Marie-Pierre Bussières, 'The Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul*, Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 2.30.7, and the Second-Century Battle for Paul's Legacy,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004): 190; William R. Murdock and George W. MacRae, 'The Apocalypse of Paul: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 49.

[64] Murdock and MacRae, 'The Apocalypse of Paul: Introduction,' 48.

the second century Irenaeus relayed what he saw as the Valentinian gnostic account of Paul's ascension, he pointed out that Paul was unsure whether he was in the body or out of the body when he had his vision (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 2.30.7), arguing that Paul could not have been a gnostic because in gnostic thought the material could not receive spiritual revelations.[65] However, the *Apocalypse of Paul* does settle the issue of 'whether in the body or out of the body' (2 Cor 12:2–3), interpreting the account in a distinctively dualistic manner (19,26–20,5). Though there is no direct proof, one may reasonably conclude that the teacher or community behind this document would have treated elements of the incarnational narrative of Christ similarly.

Concept of Our Great Power (NHC VI,4). Debate concerning the dating of this writing persists, with some scholars wanting to date the text rather early because of apparent proto-Sahidic readings; others wanting to date it late (fourth century CE) because of its content. I have decided to treat it as secondary testimony from the late second century, though one quickly discovers that its concept of the christological narrative does not differ substantially from other non-catholic views at the same time. Regarding 41,30–42,4, Kurt Rudolph notes that *Concept of Our Great Power* 'states only briefly that the ruler of the lower world sought in vain to hold Christ fast, since he was not in a position to discover "the (special) nature of his flesh."'[66] Stroumsa, relying on the translation of Wisse, takes the words in a less cognitive sense and notes, 'The text … describes how the ruler of the archons "found that the nature of his [the Savior's] flesh could not be seized, in order to show it to the archons."'[67]

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[65] Kaler, Painchaud, and Bussières, 'The Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul*,' 179–80. These scholars argue that Irenaeus did not specifically know the *Apoc. Paul*, but that Irenaeus used Paul's description of his ascent to the third heaven to put the Valentinian cosmology to a test, demonstrating that their concept of the spiritual realm does not fit the apostolic standard of truth.

[66] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 161.

[67] Stroumsa, 'Christ's Laughter,' 272.

Paraphrase of Shem (NHC VII,1). This tractate is dated in the late second or early third century.[68] It is rightly regarded as a basically non-Christian gnostic text with a few possible Christian references.[69] These may include a polemic against either catholic of gnostic baptism (30.21–27). A possible docetic christological allusion is found in 38,28–39,6: 'When I have completed the times which are assigned to me upon the earth, then I will cast from me [my garment of fire]. And my unequalled garment will come forth upon me, and also all my garments which I put on in all the clouds which were from the Astonishment of the Spirit.' In any case, the physical fleshly body is disparaged, arguing against a full incarnational narrative (34.24–34; 36,25–29).

Gospel of Mary (BG 8502, 1). Though the date of composition is prior to the early third century, it is doubtful that one can date it earlier than the second half of the second century.[70] This dialogue

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[68] Frederik Wisse, 'The Paraphrase of Shem: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 30, ed. James M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 22. However, he once believed the text contained earlier non-Christian traditions perhaps dating from the earlier second century. See Frederik Wisse, 'The Redeemer Figure in the Paraphrase of Shem,' *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970): 130–40.

[69] Evans, 'Jesus in Gnostic Literature,' 410; Wisse, 'The Paraphrase of Shem: Introduction,' 15. Fischer is a bit more optimistic, finding some motifs that suggest Christian influences especially on the emphasis on faith rather than gnosis (Karl Martin Fischer, 'Die Paraphrase des Seem,' in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. Martin Krause, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 6 [Leiden: Brill, 1975], 265–67).

[70] R. McL. Wilson and George W. MacRae, 'The Gospel According to Mary: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 454. The allusions to canonical gospel traditions in 8,14–22 seem to recommend a late second century redaction. This is strengthened by the polemical language placed on the lips of the Savior in (8,22–9.4), which appears to address the developing legalism of catholic

with the living Savior reveals very little of his incarnation, suffering, death, or resurrection, nor the nature of his resurrected state.[71] However, several features in the text suggest that the catholic concept of resurrection would have contradicted the gospel's devaluation of the flesh. For example, to the opening question regarding whether matter would be destroyed, the Savior says, 'All natures, all formations, all creatures exist in and with one another, and they will be resolved again into their roots. For the nature of matter is resolved into the roots of its nature alone' (7,1–8).

Later Mary describes the revelation given her by the Savior, which includes an ascent narrative. As the soul ascends to the 'fourth power,' it encounters a sevenfold power, one form of which is 'the kingdom of the flesh (ⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲁⲣⲝ̄),' another 'the foolish wisdom of flesh (ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲣⲝ̄)' (16,9–11). And when asked by the fourth power from whence the ascending soul comes (16,14–16), it answers, 'What binds me has been slain, and what surrounds me has been overcome, and my desire has been ended, and ignorance has died' (16,17–21). This appears to refer to the escape from the flesh prior to the ascent into the heavens. If we regard this ascent as referring to the Savior, then *Gospel of Mary* presents a non-incarnational narrative. If this refers to the experience of victorious souls, then it provides indirect evidence of what the community of *Gospel of Mary* likely believed about the nature of the Savior's ascension and dissociation from flesh.

LATER TESTIMONY: TERTIARY EVIDENCE

I have classified the following texts as 'tertiary' testimony for a number of reasons. Several are far too late to be of any direct use in filling out the contours of christologies in the early second century. Others are devoid of any christological treatments. However, inclusion of these texts helps to illustrate the trajectories of non-catholic christological narratives in the second through the third centuries.

Christianity.

[71] His suffering is implied in 9,10–12: 'If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?'

Gospel of Philip (NHC II,3). Isenberg suggests *Gospel of Philip* was written as late as the second half of the third century in Syria.[72] Lundhaug, however, places it in the fourth or fifth century in Egypt,[73] interpreting it in light of a post-Nicene orthodoxy. However, Lundhaug acknowledges that the text conforms 'to an accepted dogmatic statement while also teacing its opposite.'[74] In any case, the tone of the tractate is clearly polemical, directed against key aspects of the catholic incarnational narrative (e.g., 55,23–28, 33–36).[75] In 57,29–58.10, we encounter not a stable incarnational union of humanity and deity, but a polymorphic Christ, who changes not merely his appearance, but his form on various occasions. On the resurrection of Jesus, the text advances a spiritual resurrection, considering physical death as an escape from the body (56,15–19). Regarding resurrection in general, the text is quite clear: 'Some are afraid lest they rise naked. Because of this they wish to rise in the flesh, and [they] do not know that it is those who wear the [flesh] who are naked. [It is] those who […] to unclothe themselves who are not naked' (56,26–30).[76] However, as

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[72] Wesley W. Isenberg, 'The Gospel According to Philip: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7, together with XIII,2, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 1, *Gospel According to Thomas*, *Gospel According to Philip*, *Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 131–35.

[73] Hugo Lundhaug, 'Begotten, Not Made, to Arise in This Flesh: The Post-Nicene Soteriology of the *Gospel of Philip*,' in *Beyond the Gnostic Gospels: Studies Building on the Work of Elaine Pagels*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi, Lance Jenott, Nicola Denzey Lewis, and Philippa Townsend, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, vol. 82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 235–271.

[74] Lundhaug, 'Begotten, Not Made, to Arise in This Flesh,' 243.

[75] See Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *The Nature of the Archons: A Study in the Soteriology of a Gnostic Treatise from Nag Hammadi (CGII, 4)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985), 92–93.

[76] See comments in Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings*, 64–65.

might be fitting for a text trying to find its place in the historical context of a chastened non-catholic tradition, Lundhaug suggests:

> Having already at the outset rejected the resurrection of the material flesh, and ridiculed those who are afraid to arise without it, the *Gospel of Philip* defines its position on the resurrection body also in opposition to the view that there is no resurrection of the flesh whatsoever, thus placing itself firmly in the middle between the two extremes in the debate over the resurrection of the flesh.[77]

On the Origin of the World (NHC II,5 and XIII,2). Perkins regards *On the Origin of the World* to fall into the category of Nag Hammadi texts in which the Logos is added to a gnostic system, thus Christianizing an essentially non-Christian text or tradition.[78] As such, an incarnational narrative would not be expected to serve a central role in writing, which is, in this case, to describe the creation of the world in contrast to false views.[79] Indeed, the Christ or redeemer figure is not to be found here. But in any case, Bethge dates the tractate at the end of the third century or beginning of the fourth, far out of the scope of second century Christianity.[80]

Exegesis on the Soul (NHC II,6). Robinson suggests the Greek text underlying the Coptic *Exegesis on the Soul* was written as early as 200 CE.[81] The explicit sexual analogy of the virgin soul falling into

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[77] Lundhaug, 'Begotten, Not Made, to Arise in This Flesh,' 255.

[78] Perkins, 'Logos Christologies in the Nag Hammadi Codices,' 380–81.

[79] Pheme Perkins, 'On the Origin of the World (CG II.5): A Gnostic Physics,' *Vigiliae christianae* 34 (1980): 35–46.

[80] Hans-Gebhard Bethge, 'On the Origin of the World: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XII,2, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P.Oxy. 1,654,655*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 2, *On the Origin of the World, Expository Treatise on the Soul, Book of Thomas the Contender*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 12–13.

[81] William C. Robinson, Jr., 'The Expository Treatise on the Soul: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XII,2, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P.Oxy. 1,654,655*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 2, *On the Origin of*

the body, which is then raped, seduced, prostituted, or otherwise corrupted (127,22–129,5) indicates a duality between the good soul and the evil body that must be overcome not by resurrection but by rescue. The internal spiritual 'baptism' that renews the tainted soul (131,27–132,2) is the spiritual resurrection by which the soul is regenerated, allowing it to ascend to its original purity (134,6–15).

The Book of Thomas the Contender (NHC II,7). Turner regards *The Book of Thomas the Contender* to have been written in the first half of the third century.[82] It purports to be an account of a dialogue between the resurrected Jesus and his twin brother, Judas Thomas, referring to the beastly nature of the body and disparaging it as a burden to the soul that must be overcome rather than redeemed through resurrection (138.39–139.12; 141.6–8; 145.8–10). In the dialogue Jesus proclaims, 'Woe to you who hope in the flesh and in the prison that will perish! … Your hope is set upon the world and your god is this life! You are corrupting your souls!' (143.11–15).

Authoritative Teaching (NHC VI,3). MacRae notes that *Authoritative Teaching* 'seems to presuppose a generally gnostic, i.e., anticosmic dualist, understanding of the fate of the soul in the material world.'[83] Given the evident disdain for the material body (22,12–20), its underlying community would have no inclinations toward a full catholic incarnational christology.

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the World, Expository Treatise on the Soul, Book of Thomas the Contender*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 136.

[82] John D. Turner, 'The Book of Thomas the Contender: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XII,2, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P.Oxy. 1,654,655*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 2, *On the Origin of the World, Expository Treatise on the Soul, Book of Thomas the Contender*, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 173.

[83] George W. MacRae, 'Authoritative Teaching: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 258.

The Teachings of Silvanus (NHC VII,4). Peel dates *Teachings of Silvanus* in the late third or early fourth century.[84] As such, the text exhibits a christology quite close to the catholic incarnational narrative (103,34–104,14).[85] Though some of the language regarding the 'flesh' tends toward asceticism (92,10–94,29), one does not find a radical disparaging of the flesh or a rejection of a bodily resurrection as one finds in earlier non-catholic texts. Given the likely fourth century context of this text, we may be witnessing here a 'chastened' narrative that has taken pains to align itself with the prevailing catholic incarnational christology of the time.

Zostrianos (NHC VIII,1). Sieber regards *Zostrianos* to be a text of the late second or early third century, possibly from Alexandria.[86] As a Sethian gnostic text, the writing has no clear Christian influence and Christ is not present in the narrative. Furthermore, the text exhibits a disparaging of bodily existence characteristic of the gnostic worldview (1,10–21). In 131,2–14 we find a polemic against some form of baptism, though this may also be an

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84 Malcolm L. Peel, 'The Teachings of Silvanus: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Birger A. Pearson, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 30, ed. James M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 272–73. He explains, 'The internal evidence to be considered includes our author's knowledge of the biblical canon, the stage of development of key theological terms, and affinities of his thought with that of church fathers from the third and fourth centuries' (ibid., 273). Also see Roelof van den Broek, 'The Theology of the Teachings of Silvanus,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 (1986): 1–23.

85 See Jan Zandee, '"Die Lehren des Silvanus" als Teil der Schriften von Nag Hammadi und der Gnostizisum,' in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. Martin Krause, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 239–52. Zandee notes that although *Teach. Silv.* 'in gewissen Hinsichten mit gnosticschen Gedankengägen verglichen werden kann,' the text is 'nicht gnostisch' (ibid., 239).

86 John H. Sieber, 'Zostrianos: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. John H. Sieber, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 7, 25–26.

exhortation against submitting to martyrdom.[87] In any case, this passage seems to preclude the idea of a continued bodily existence as part of salvation: 'Do not baptize yourselves with death. … You have not come to suffer; rather, you have come to escape your bondage. Release yourselves, and that which has bound you will be dissolved. Save yourselves so that your soul may be saved.'

The Interpretation of Knowledge (NHC XI,1). In this tractate, dating from the late second or early third centuries, we have an example of the gnostic hermeneutic applied to the Christian tradition. Pagels suggests that *Interpretation of Knowledge* 'offers an exegesis of major elements of Christian tradition interpreted according to knowledge (γνῶσις).'[88] We are told that the Son '[appeared] as flesh (ⲛ̄ⲤⲀⲢⳌ̄)' (12,18) and Christ was both crucified and died (1,20–21; 5,30–31). However, the anthropological and soteriological concept is decisively contrary to the flesh and seems to rule out a fleshly bodily resurrection for either humans or for Jesus Christ (6,24–36). The flesh—called a 'garment of condemnation' (11,27) is a 'burden' (10,37) to those who wear it. Thus, what we see in *Interpretation of Knowledge* is an exposition of Christian texts and traditions in a mildly gnostic (probably Valentinian) direction which rejects the redemption of the flesh and views salvation as an escape from the material, physical form. It is at this point that it appears to differ from the catholic Christian account of the full incarnational narrative.

The Sentences of Sextus (NHC XII,1). The original Greek text of *Sentences of Sextus* comes from sometime in the second century, at least before Origen.[89] Though the text has a strong ascetic

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[87] Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue*, 25–26.

[88] Elaine H. Pagels, 'The Interpretation of Knowledge: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 21.

[89] Henry Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus: A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics*, Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature, New series, ed. C. H. Dodd, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 115–16.

tendency, there is no indication of an anti-incarnational christology or a non-incarnational narrative. As such, it is not surprising that the *Sentences of Sextus* enjoyed popularity among diverse Christian groups in Egypt. It is also notable that the extant Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian versions of the text were used among later catholic Christians in both the East and West, though not without some controversy.[90] *Sentences of Sextus* is therefore not a decisively non-catholic writing. However, due to the fragmentary nature of the text, one cannot be sure whether missing maxims of Codex XII had not been affected by a non-catholic approach to the world, the flesh, and christology. Based on maxims preserved in the extant folios of Codex XII,*1*, Wisse writes, 'The theological outlook of the Coptic translator is not distinguishable from that of the Greek Sextus.'[91] In fact, Wisse pointed out the example of maxim 346, in which the Coptic translator seems to have inserted 'since it is innocent' in reference to the body (XII,*1* 30,11–14), but admits that 'Sextus generally has a lower view of the body' than the Greek text.[92] *Sentences of Sextus* may be classified along with *Teachings of Silvanus* as a marginally catholic Christian documents that was adopted by later (moderate) gnostics for its asceticism. *Sentences of Sextus* has little information that would help us determine the author's christological understanding, but we would have no reason to believe the author of the Greek text could not have held to an incarnational narrative.

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[90] Ibid., ix, 107–37; Frederik Wisse, 'The Sentences of Sextus: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 295–96.

[91] Ibid., 300.

[92] Ibid. For an overview of the attitude of *Sent. Sextus* toward the body, see Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus*, 98–101.

CHAPTER 19. CONTRASTED COMMUNITIES AND CONFLICTING NARRATIVES

Based on the potentially early primary and secondary non-catholic testimony explored in chapter 17, one observes that the texts differ from the catholic incarnational narrative at key points. With regard to the pre-incarnate existence of the Logos (and when they are not silent on the matter), these texts affirm some kind of pre-earthly existence, though the relationship to other heavenly beings is sometimes quite complex.

Only *Treatise on the Resurrection* appears to affirm something like a union of the Son/Logos with fleshly humanity, while others disparage fleshly existence (*Ap. Jas.*; *Gos. Truth.*; *Gos. Thom.*; *Dial. Sav.*). Others redefine the concept of 'flesh' as 'spiritual flesh' or a 'spiritual body' (*Gos. Truth*; *Treat. Res.*). In some cases, the union of the flesh and spirit in Christ is superficial, as in *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, wherein the heavenly being evicts the spirit from a human body and takes up residence. Or the heavenly and earthly beings are distinguished either explicitly (*2 Apoc. Jas.*; *Acts John*) or implicitly (*Gos. Truth*; *Soph. Jes. Chr.*; *Dial. Sav.*). We also see the phenomenon of the polymorphic Christ whose body dynamically changes shapes (*Trim. Prot.*; *Acts John*; *Soph. Jes. Chr.*). The true birth and life of the incarnate Son/Logos was often iterated in catholic documents in terms of the virgin birth, infancy, or growth of Jesus of Nazareth. However, the earliest non-catholic literature is virtually silent concerning the earthly human origins of Christ.

Figure 35: Discernible elements of a non-incarnational narrative in the earliest non-catholic writings (to about 150 CE). (Note: a '+' indicates evidence of affirmation; a '–' indicates evidence of rejection.)

Writing	Pre-incarnate existence	Incarnational union	Birth and life	Suffering and death	Bodily resurrection	Heavenly assumption
Ap. Jas	+			+	–	+
Gos. Truth	+			+	–	+
Treat. Res.	+	+			–	+
Gos. Thom.	+		–		–	+
2 Apoc. Jas	+	–			–	+
Treat. Seth	+	–		–	–	+
Trim. Prot.	+	–				+
Act. John	+	–		–		+
Soph. Jes. Chr.	+	–			–	
Dial. Sav.	+				–	+
Apoc. Adam						
Act. Pet.						

Several non-catholic texts reject the idea that the heavenly Son suffered and died, suggesting that a stand-in died in his place (*Treat. Seth*; *Acts John*). Other texts refer to the death of the mortal body as a necessary and positive escape (*Gos. Truth*, *Treat. Res.*; *Dial. Sav.*). And *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* rejects martyrdom, which catholics viewed as an act of ultimate discipleship as believers followed their Lord in death. And though most non-catholic texts reveal a heavenly assumption of the Son/Logos figure, none teach—and most reject—a fleshly resurrection or physical ascension. Thus, *Apocryphon of James* and *Second Apocalypse of James* refer to the shedding of the earthly body and a spiritual 'resurrection.'

In sum, no potentially early non-catholic text conforms completely to the six components of the catholic incarnational narrative. On the other hand, every text either explicitly or implicitly differs from at least one (and often several) tenets of the incarnational narrative. And further, texts engage in anti-incarnational polemics against catholic Christians (*Treat. Seth*) or interpret Scripture with a non-incarnational hermeneutic (*Trim. Prot.*; *Gos. Thom.*).

The picture that emerges from the later testimony (explored in chapter 18) differs somewhat from the earlier testimony (chapter 17). The situation appears to be even more diverse and fragmented, with more exaggerated extremes. In these texts one may discern two trajectories among non-catholic groups and their christological narratives. The first trajectory appears to be a hardening of the anti-catholic, anti-incarnational positions, exampled by the anti-catholic polemic and a non-incarnational hermeneutic. The community of *Apocalypse of Peter* argues against the catholic Christians who believe in a 'dead man' and regards those who held to an incarnational christology to be false teachers. Similar anti-incarnational polemics are seen in *Gospel of Judas* and *Gospel of Philip*. The *Letter of Peter to Philip* reinterprets the traditional catholic 'credo' or incarnational narrative along non-incarnational lines,[1] as do *Apocryphon of John* and *Interpretation of Knowledge*.[2] Several texts exhibit very little Christian teaching, much less a christological narrative (*Orig. World.*; *Auth. Teach.*; *Zost.*), which may suggest these texts came from a non-Christian gnostic tradition. It may also be that they originated from communities that had experienced an acute

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[1] Marvin W. Meyer, 'Letter of Peter to Philip: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. John H. Sieber, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 231.

[2] Elaine H. Pagels, 'The Interpretation of Knowledge: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 21; W. C. van Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings: A Preliminary Survey of the Nag Hammadi Find*, Studies in Biblical Theology 30 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960), 77–79.

dissociation from catholic Christian identity centered on christological norms. Either view would fit the evidence.

The second trajectory appears to be a softening of the flesh/spirit dualism toward a view that more closely resembles the catholic incarnational norm. The third century *Tri. Trac.* may thus represent a modification of earlier Valentinian anti-incarnational views, perhaps capitulating to the pressure from western catholic heresiologists and apologists.[3] Two texts, *Sentences of Sextus* and *Teachings of Silvanus*, appear to allow for an incarnational reading. However, the latter comes from the early fourth century while the former was, in fact, utilized by catholic communities, and may have been included in the Nag Hammadi Library by non-catholics for its ascetic teachings.

Between these trajectories, most of these texts evidence a number of distinct differences from the catholic incarnational narrative. With regard to the pre-incarnate existence of the Son/Logos, most texts affirm an origin of the Savior from the heavenly realm, though often described within a demiurgical mythological framework rather than within a catholic concept of the Logos as Son of the creator God. Yet with regard to the incarnational union of the Son with fleshly humanity, in several cases fleshly existence itself is disparaged (*1 Apoc. Jas.*; *Apoc. Paul*; *Gos. Mary.*; *Thom. Cont.*; *Auth. Teach.*; *Zost.*) or 'flesh' is redefined in essential spiritual terms (*Great Pow.*; *Paraph. Shem*). In *Second Treatise of the Greath Seth* the heavenly Savior actually evicts the spirit from the body of Jesus to take possession. Often the heavenly and earthly are separated (*Ep. Pet. Phil.*; *Val. Exp.*; *Gos. Eg.*), or the physical presence of Christ is marked by the phenomenon of polymorphy (*Ap. John*; *Apoc. Paul*; *Gos. Phil.*), indicating a loose union of the divine and human.

Several of these texts either explicitly or implicitly exclude the incarnate suffering and death of the heavenly Son. In one place we

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[3] Harold W. Attridge and Elaine H. Pagels, 'The Tripartite Tractate: Introduction,' in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies, ed. Martin Krause, James M. Robinson, and Frederik Wisse, vol. 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 186, 189.

are told that Christ did not really suffer and die (*1 Apoc. Jas.*); in another Christ abandoned the physical Jesus prior to the passion (*Apoc. Peter*). Sometimes death is viewed positively as an escape from the mortal body of death (*1 Apoc. Jas.*; *Gos. Judas*; *Gos. Mary*; *Thom. Cont.*), other times martyrdom is rejected, perhaps because of the catholic association of martyrdom as an imitation of Christ's own death (*Testim. Truth*).

Figure 36. Discernible elements of a non-incarnational narrative in the later non-catholic testimony (from about 150 to 225 CE).

Writing	Pre-incarnate existence	Incarnational union	Birth and life	Suffering and death	Bodily resurrection	Heavenly assumption
Pr. Paul						
Tri. Trac.		+		+		
1 Apoc. Jas.				−		
Acts Pet. 12 Apost.					−	
Apoc. Peter				−	−	
Ep. Pet. Phil.	+	+		+	−	−
Melch.	−	−				
Testim. Truth	+		+		−	
Val. Exp.		−				
Gos. Judas				+	−	
Ap. John					−	
Hyp. Arch.						
Gos. Egypt.						
Apoc. Paul					−	
Great Pow.		−				
Paraph. Shem					−	
Gos. Mary					−	−

The catholic view of the incarnate resurrection of the Son is likewise denied, as is evident from their views of the fate of the fleshly part of humanity after death. Sometimes the resurrection body is regarded as immaterial or phantasmal (*Acts Pet. 12 Apos.*; *Ep. Pet. Phil.*). Or, more often, the resurrection in general is redefined as an escape from the bonds of the fleshly body, indistinguishable from the spiritual ascent (*Ep. Pet. Phil.*; *Ap. John*; *Paraph. Shem*; *Gos. Phil.*; *Exeg. Soul. Thom. Cont.*; *Interp. Know.*). The *Testimony of Truth* explicitly rejects the catholic doctrine of the bodily resurrection, and the *Exeg. Soul* interprets the resurrection as a present spiritual reality.

Figure 37. Discernible elements of a non-incarnational narrative in the tertiary non-catholic testimony (from about 200 CE).

Writing	Pre-incarnate existence	Incarnational union	Birth and life	Suffering and death	Bodily resurrection	Heavenly assumption
Gos. Phil.					−	
Orig. World						
Exeg. Soul					−	
Thom. Cont.					−	
Auth. Teach.						
Teach. Silv.	+	+		+		
Zost.					−	
Int. Know.		+		+	−	
Sent. Sextus						

In sum, with the exception of the *Sent. Sextus* and *Teach. Silv*, when they are not silent, the later non-catholic texts surveyed here either explicitly or implicitly differ from at least one (and often several) components of the incarnational narrative (see above, Figures 36 and 37). In some later texts one can discern a possible tendency toward re-aligning with the catholic incarnational narrative, while

others seem to indicate an extreme polemical rejection of catholic Christian incarnational norms.

CONCLUSION: SECOND CENTURY NON-INCARNATIONAL CHRISTOLOGIES

In this chapter we have seen the big picture at a glance. Simply put, texts that were either immediately or eventually rejected by early catholic Christians (or developed by groups that explicitly distinguished themselves from catholic Christians) differed from the catholic incarnational narrative at significant points. In many cases, these writings have a polemical purpose directed toward specific elements of the central incarnational narrative or its implications. In some cases they also exhibit a non-incarnational hermeneutic applied to earlier texts and traditions, including modification of terms and images away from their common interpretation or intention.[4] The later, secondary, and polemical character of these non-catholic texts may help us shape the conceptual contours of the earlier, primary, and positive tradition established by catholic Christians by the early decades of the second century. That is, we can focus the image of early catholic Christianity precisely by contrasting it with what it was not. Where a christological narrative is present in part or in whole in the non-catholic tractates, this literature presents a wide range of views about Christ's relationship to divinity, the world, and the human body or flesh. The majority of these various christologies differ significantly from the well-established incarnational narrative of early second century catholic Christians.

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[4] See, for example, See Klaus Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Nag-Hammadi-Traktate 'Apokalypse des Petrus' (NHC VII,3) und 'Testimonium Veritatis' (NHC IX,3)* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); Alastair H. B. Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 61–68; Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, ed. Stephen Emmel and Johannes van Oort, vol. 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

Most non-catholics asserted that the Savior, Logos, Christ, or Son existed prior to his descent from the heavenly realm or pleroma. However, in many instances the Son existed not as the divine Logos who was always with the creator God, but as one of many emanations from the unknown Father. Others regarded the pre-incarnate Son as an inferior being. Certain Jewish Christians seem to have made a radical distinction between the earthly Jesus born of natural means and the heavenly power that energized the godly mortal, rendering the concept of personal pre-incarnate existence meaningless.

Also, non-catholics often described some kind of identification or limited union with humanity for the purpose of revelation. However, a few denied the reality of the incarnation complete by resorting to a purely docetic doctrine of a non-fleshly body. Others presented a heavenly being who commandeered the body of a mortal man. Some demonstrated the loose association with the physical body when the body was abandoned as a shell of the true spiritual being within. While some Jewish Christian sects seem to have denied the virgin birth, other groups rejected the human birth. However, most non-incarnational narratives include an earthly sojourn of Christ, during which he taught his disciples wisdom or gnosis or served as an example of godly living.

Many non-catholic accounts of Christ's suffering and death differ radically from the incarnational narrative. Some traditions include the passion in their narratives but emphasize it as a means of escaping the prison of flesh. Others deny that the spiritual being endured suffering, asserting that only the flesh suffered while the spiritual person was freed from suffering. Still others insist that somebody suffered in the place of Christ.

No non-catholic narratives of the second century asserted a true fleshly resurrection of the incarnate Son. Even if all other aspects of the narrative were preserved, the resurrection of the crucified body marks the limit of non-catholic tolerance of an incarnational narrative. While many use the language of resurrection, it is either a spiritual resurrection of the inner being through gnosis, awaiting escape from the body; or it is the spiritual separation from the 'tomb' of the body and rebirth as a non-fleshly spiritual being. Sometimes the non-catholics used the term 'flesh' to describe the post-resurrection state, but the term referred not to the flesh that died and was buried, but to a new immortal spiritual

flesh of immortal beings. In line with this perspective, no non-catholic text asserted that the Son ascended to heaven with a fleshly resurrected body.

THE NARRATIVE CENTER OF CATHOLIC SOLIDARITY AS THE SOURCE OF CONTROVERSY WITH NON-CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

As one voice among many in the ongoing scholarly discussions regarding catholic self-definition and models of unity and diversity in early Christianity, this study has focused on the role of incarnational christology as the essential, conscious, and intentional doctrinal norm of early catholic identity.

By analyzing the christological continuity among writings associated with Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, Rome, and perhaps Palestine and Egypt, and by discerning the role of the incarnational narrative in each document's overall argument and theology, I have shown that the early second century meta-community of 'catholic' Christianity was united on a clear incarnational christological narrative. Rudimentary structures, confessions, literature, and liturgy had already been produced to promote and safeguard important tenets of this narrative, which also served to exclude alternate narratives. These elements would have continued to develop into standard forms in later centuries and eventually become external marks of catholic Christianity itself, but in the early second century they served the purpose of preserving and passing on the christological narrative.

In chapters 3–9, I argued that the writings of Ignatius of Antioch suggested that a distinct catholic Christian identity prevailed by the early years of the second century. This identity was centered on the 'incarnational narrative.' Based on Ignatius's testimony, I argued that this sense of catholic Christian unity founded on faithfulness to the incarnational narrative was widespread, with representative communities thriving at least in Antioch, western Asia Minor, and Rome.

In chapters 10–15 I examined the available evidence of writings from the generation of Christians roughly contemporary with Ignatius, demonstrating that the regions of Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, Rome, and possibly Palestine and Egypt, provide testimony for the presence and potency of the

incarnational narrative as the identity-forging mark of catholicity. Though a stable canon, formulaic creed, and clear episcopacy were in the formative stages in the early second century and would further develop into powerful identity markers by the century's end, these three structures appear to have developed as means of strengthening and defending the already established substance of the incarnational narrative. Catholic writers also employed an 'incarnational hermeneutic' to earlier texts and traditions, demonstrating that the incarnational narrative was the presupposed understanding, rather than simply the product of long reflection or exegesis.

In chaptesr 16–18, I tested the thesis of a widespread catholic identity centered on the incarnational narrative by examining the christologies of a wide spectrum of non-catholic writings. I demonstrated that the christological narratives they advanced differed considerably from the catholic incarnational narrative. Whereas catholic Christians employed an 'incarnational hermeneutic' to texts and traditions, non-catholic writers differed from catholic Christians by employing a non-incarnational or sometimes even anti-incarnational hermeneutic in the form of a 'protest exegesis.' Because this hermeneutic was often polemical in nature and was applied to earlier Christian texts, it is not unreasonable to conclude that their non-incarnational christologies were secondary revisions forged in response to an established catholic incarnational identity, which they would have encountered throughout the Roman world by the beginning of the second century.

RESULTS OF THIS STUDY

In light of the evidence and arguments in this study, I propose a model of understanding unity and diversity in early Christianity that defines a confessional center of early catholic identity that both allows for extreme expressions of diversity of texts and traditions while explaining the exclusion of teachers, texts, and traditions that deviated from the confessional norm. This model also proposes a simple explanation for the promotion and protection of a clear catholic identity in the early second century apart from the structures of an established canon, creed, and cathedra. From this investigation a confessional center of catholic Christianity emerged, which focuses on the incarnational advent of the heavenly Son of

God in the flesh, where he suffered, died, and rose again without abandoning this incarnational union.

In developing this thesis of an identity-forging center of incarnational christology early in the second century, I have demonstrated four things.

First, I established a connection between the incarnational christological narrative and catholic self-identity. Primarily through an analysis of early second century writings, I argue that amidst a wide variety of texts, traditions, and teachers, early catholic Christians identified with other catholic communities on the basis of a shared incarnational christological narrative. While ecclesiastical, social, and liturgical concerns served to defend and promote the christological center, the commonly affirmed threefold standard of catholic identity—a canon, a creed, and an episcopal cathedra—were not the center of catholic identity in the earliest decades of the second century. Early catholic Christianity was 'catholic' precisely because of a shared faithfulness to the incarnational narrative.

Second, because incarnational christology formed the positive center of early catholic self-definition, the early catholic Christians naturally used this christological center as the source for distinguishing between what we conventionally call 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy.' It would therefore be inaccurate to maintain that in the second century Christians 'were struggling to define their identity in the face of powerful Jewish and pagan currents.'[5] Whatever struggles for self-identity may have occurred among what became catholic Christian communities, these struggles had already occurred by the end of the first century. The second century conflicts with other christologies and Christianities were therefore the effects—not the causes—of an essential catholic identity centered on faithfulness to the incarnational narrative.

It seems that the most plausible hypothesis based on the constellation of evidences in this study would be that the struggle in the middle to late second century was not to define catholic identity, but to defend catholic identity. In contrast, non-catholic

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[5] Alastair H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 41.

teachers and traditions appeared to have struggled during the second and even third centuries with defining their non-catholic identities vis-à-vis an increasingly potent second century catholic Christianity. Naturally, as catholic identity encountered competing social, political, or religious communities, their rudimentary incarnational narrative would move through states of reflection and refinement, but the distinction between 'orthodox' and 'heretical' or 'catholic' and 'non-catholic' was primarily based on traditional christological considerations.

Third, I argue that it was in light of a traditional and authoritative incarnational christological narrative that catholic writers interpreted both texts and worldviews, so that an incarnational hermeneutic was applied in catholic communities while non-catholic groups applied a distinctly non-incarnational or even anti-incarnational hermeneutic to the same texts and traditions. Therefore, the basis of incarnational christology was not primarily reflective exegesis of authoritative texts, but a received incarnational tradition within the early catholic communities. Those within the stream of tradition that had been set in motion by the first century Christian leaders did not rely heavily upon written accounts or personal authority. Rather, they read the Old Testament Scriptures in light of their incarnational presuppositions, relying upon the incarnational narrative itself in their paraenesis and theological reflection. The incarnational narrative was the primary epistemological center and authoritative source for catholic Christians in the early second century, not apostolic texts or episcopal leadership. Such structures and strictures would develop later in the century.

CHAPTER 20. POSTSCRIPT: WHENCE THE INCARNATIONAL NARRATIVE?

As the curtain opens on the year 100 CE, we are confronted with widespread evidence of the presence and potency of a particular incarnational christological narrative marking the common identity of far-flung Christian communities. When and whence did such a catholic identity originate? I believe this question can be cautiously answered by analogy with the rise and development of known non-catholic movements later in the second century. In his 1981 presidential address of the Society of Biblical Literature, James M. Robinson made the point that

> one may assume that second-century Gnosticism did not first emerge then in the full-blown form of the Valentinian and Basilidean systems. For such historical developments call for lead-time, just as, at the next stage, Clement and Origen of Alexandria on the one hand and Irenaeus and Tertullian on the other are inconceivable apart from the century leading up to their systems. Thus even if it were true that Gnosticism as known in the second-century systems did not exist in the Pauline and Johannine schools going back to the first century, the left-wing trajectory out of which second-century Gnosticism emerged must have been contemporary with the Pauline and Johannine schools.[1]

Thus, Robinson argues quite reasonably that the presence of stable gnostic systems implied an earlier presence of pre-Valentinian and Basilidean trajectories contemporary with the Pauline and

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[1] James M. Robinson, 'Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (or To the Apostles' Creed),' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 6.

Johannine schools at the end of the first century. Granting at least the concept of a 'lead-time,' one may apply the same principle to the evidence presented in this study. Not only do we see a 'catholic' system of christological thought in the first decades of the second century, but this system—unlike the Valentinian and Basilidean systems a few decades later—was already foundational and geographically widespread, so that it had inspired numerous teachers, texts, and traditions by the early second century. And for all its intra-community diversity, the meta-community of catholic Christians was united on an incarnational narrative concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I would therefore propose that the early, foundational, and widespread status of the incarnational narrative among catholic communities suggests an origin of this type of christology by the middle to third quarter of the first century (c. 50 to 75 CE). A period of fifty years seems to be enough time to allow for widespread dissemination of this unique christological narrative. This would also allow enough time for this christology to form the center and organizing principle of much theological and paraenetic reflection in the early second century. If we take Marcionism or Valentinianism—both of which originated in the second quarter of the second century—as paradigms of how long it might take for a distinctive theology to spread throughout the Roman world, the estimation of a mid-first century origin of the distinctive incarnational narrative does not appear unrealistic.[2]

Another analogy from the methodology of textual criticism is also possible. Generally speaking, a variant reading is to be preferred as evidencing an earlier original reading if that variant is represented by manuscripts that are earlier, of better quality, and of broader geographical diversity. Also, the more difficult reading is to be preferred to the easier, and the reading that best explains the rise of the other variants is more likely to be original. In the case of the

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[2] The analogy is not entirely equivalent, because both Marcionism and Valentinianism utilized existing Christian communities to draw their converts, somewhat akin, perhaps, to the early Christian appeal to local Jewish communities and their gentile constituencies during the first century missionary endeavors.

incarnational narrative, this christology was early, geographically widespread, and enjoyed historical continuity with earlier Christian writings of the first century as well as later second century communities. Also, the dichotomous doctrine of the incarnation was philosophically difficult for both Jews and Gentiles, marking it as the more difficult position. This, in turn, best explains the rise of other non-incarnational traditions that would have sought to relieve the incarnational paradox with a more philosophically satisfying christological narrative. To the degree that the canons of textual criticism may apply to competing oral traditions and their communities (and such an analogy is somewhat tenuous), the early, foundational, and geographically widespread presence of the incarnational narrative among catholic communities may imply a common source of this tradition in the third quarter of the first century, sometime between 50 and 75 CE.

THE NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND: A SURVEY

As one examines Christian texts that scholarship generally regards to have originated during this period between roughly 50 and 75 CE, one can discern the seeds of such an incarnational narrative. In the Pauline letters, and particularly those letters whose authenticity are generally regarded as undisputed,[3] we see many of the elements of an early Pauline concept of an incarnational narrative quite similar to the synthetic six-movement narrative of Ignatius of Antioch:

   1.   The pre-incarnate existence of the Son of God[4]

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[3] These include Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

[4] 1 Cor 8:6; 10:4; 15:47; Phil 2:6. Sometimes the pre-incarnate existence is implied by the language of 'sending,' as in Rom 8:3 and Gal 4:4, or in language implying a humiliation from a previous exalted state or status (2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6–7). Other times the association of Christ as the Lord (κύριος) of passages in the Septuagint that translate the divine name יהוה suggests a heavenly divine relationship with God the Father that transcends a mere temporal earthly existence (Rom 10:9–17 [cf. Joel 2:32];

2.   The incarnational union of the Son with fleshly humanity in the person of Jesus Christ[5]

3.   The true birth and life of the incarnate Son[6]

4.   The true suffering and death of the incarnate Son[7]

5.   The true fleshly bodily resurrection of the incarnate Son[8]

6.   The heavenly assumption of the incarnate Son/Logos[9]

Not only did Paul hold such an incarnational narrative as the historical events that lay behind his notion of the εὐαγγέλιον, but he also regarded this as central to the identity of Christians. His entire apostolic ministry was as one 'set apart for the gospel of God … concerning His Son' (Rom 1:1–4). The initiatory rite of baptism involved the believer's association with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:3–4; Gal 3:27), and the communal rite of the Lord's supper, or 'eucharist,' recalled the flesh and blood, suffering, and death of Christ (1 Cor 10:16; 11:23–27). In

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Phil 2:10–11 [cf. Isa 45:23). Some passages also suggest an assertion of deity (Rom 9:5; 1 Cor 2:8), though some of these are not nearly as clear as later assertions of the deity of Christ (as in Jn 1:1).

[5] Rom 1:3–4; 8:3; 9:5; Gal 2:6–8.

[6] Gal 4:4; Phil 2:7–8.

[7] Rom 5:7–10; 8:11, 34; 14:9; 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2, 8; 5:7; 15:1–4; 2 Cor 1:5; 5:14–15; 13:4; Gal 2:20–21; 3:1, 13; 6:12, 14; Phil 2:8; 3:10; 1 Thess 2:15; 4:14. Often the fleshly, physical reality of Christ's death is highlighted by Paul's use of terms like 'blood,' 'flesh,' or 'body' in connection with his death (Rom 7:4; 8:3; 1 Cor 10:16–17). The death of Christ was by crucifixion and included burial—illustrated by the rite of baptism (Rom 6:3–4).

[8] Rom 4:24; 6:9–10; 7:4; 8:34; 14:9; 1 Cor 15:4–8, 12–20; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; Phil 2:9; 3:10–11; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:14) Sometimes the nature of Christ's resurrection is surmised by the way in which Paul describes the Christians' anticipated resurrection (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:35–57; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:21; 4:14–16).

[9] Sometimes the heavenly assumption is explicit (Rom 8:34). Other times it is implied by the current or eschatological functions of Christ (Rom 2:16; 8:17; 1 Cor 1:7–8; 4:5; 15:25; 2 Cor 5:10; Phil 3:20–21; 1 Thess 1:9–10; 3:13; 4:14–17).

fact, the only foundation upon which God's workers could build the local church communities was the common foundation of 'Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 3:11). This 'gospel' was described as Paul's foundational narrative (ἐν πρώτοις), upon which rests the salvation of those who hear and hold fast to this teaching: 'That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures' (1 Cor 15:3–4). In fact, Paul rested so heavily on the resurrection of Christ that if the resurrection did not, in fact, occur, he regarded both his preaching and the Christian faith to be empty (1 Cor 15:14). In Paul we even see the notion of counter-Christs and counter-gospels propagated by counterfeit apostles inspired by Satan, and one can only suspect that the content of these teachings explicitly rejected certain aspects of Paul's foundational christological narrative (2 Cor 11:3–15; Gal 1:6–9). Paul also expressed concern that his own gospel narrative was in conformity with the gospel preached by the apostles in Jerusalem (Gal 2:2), an indication of a very early and intentional 'catholic' consciousness.

Thus, it is precisely in the middle of the first century, when these seeds of Paul's incarnational narrative were being planted in the apostolic communities, that we find the budding first fruits of catholic Christian identity. From these starting points of rudimentary incarnational conceptions of Christ one may then see a rapid and widespread development of increasingly more sophisticated and complex doxological language that strengthen the narrative of the heavenly Lord who became flesh, suffered, died, and rose again. The 'deutero-Pauline' writings and the pastoral epistles, for which the traditional attribution of Pauline authorship has fallen into doubt among many scholars, present such a narrative. The Son of God enjoyed a pre-incarnate existence, sometimes described in terms of deity.[10] This divine Son was sent to earth as a man with a body of flesh.[11] He is described as suffering and dying on behalf of sinners, with a particular emphasis

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[10] This is explicitly stated in Col 1:15–17; Titus 2:13, and perhaps implied in texts like Eph 1:4.

[11] Eph 4:9–10; Col 2:9 (cf. 1:22); 1 Tim 1:15; 2:5; 3:16.

on his flesh and blood.[12] He then rose again from the dead, ascending into heaven.[13] It is this Jesus Christ who was regarded as the 'chief corner stone' of the church described in Eph 2:11–22, a passage that may refer to the universal or catholic church, the meta-community spread throughout the world (see Eph 4:4–6; 5:23–32). This universal or global 'body of Christ' was centered on the proclamation of the 'gospel' (Col 1:23). And this narratival center of Christian identity was centered on baptism (Col 2:12).

One observes the same kind of rudimentary incarnational narrative in other writings either regarded as arising from the third quarter of the first century or exhibiting signs of second-generation Christianity (e.g., Heb 2:3–4). In Hebrews the incarnational narrative is quite explicit. Christ is identified with the pre-incarnate Son who reflects the radiance of God himself and was involved in the creation of the world.[14] The Son became incarnate in a body of flesh and blood,[15] in which he suffered and died for sin.[16] He rose again from the dead,[17] then ascended into heaven to serve as the eternal high priest.[18] In the first letter of Peter, generally dated sometime in the latter half of the second century,[19] a similar narrative of Christ stands in the background: the pre-incarnate existence of the Son (1 Pet 1:20), the coming to earth to endure physical suffering and death (1:11, 19; 2:21–24; 3:18; 4:1), the resurrection (1:3, 21; 3:21), and the ascension (3:22).

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[12] Eph 2:13–16; 5:2, 25; Col 1:22, 24; 3:1; 2 Tim 2:11.

[13] Eph 1:20–23; 4:8–10; Col 1:18; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 3:16; 2 Tim 2:8.

[14] Heb 1:2–3, 6, 8–12; 2:10. The analogy of the Son of God with the literary figure, Melchizedek ('having neither beginning of days nor end of life') also suggests the author viewed the Son as having existed eternally.

[15] Heb 1:6; 2:14, 17; 5:7; 10:5; In this incarnation, the Son was made temporarily lower than the angels (Heb 2:9).

[16] Heb 2:9–10, 14; 5:8; 9:14; 10:10, 19–20; 12:2.

[17] Heb 13:20.

[18] Heb 4:14; 8:1; 9:24; 12:2.

[19] If Peter is dated during the persecution of Nero, around 62–65 CE, Petrine authorship can be regarded as possible. However, many scholars regard it as a later pseudepigraphic work written in Domitian's reign (between 90 and 100) or during Trajan's reign (about 110 CE).

In the synoptic Gospels we find nothing like the ambiguous language observed in the *Gospel of Peter* or the *Gospel of Thomas*. Rather, the words and actions of Christ point to an other-worldly authority and mission. In the opening of Mark's Gospel, the reader is told that John the Baptist's ministry was one of preparation: 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight' (Mk 1:2). The quoted text, Malachi 3:1, refers to the 'way of Yahweh' (דרך יהוח), an appellation which the evangelist refers to Jesus Christ. Christ's greater ministry of baptism by the Holy Spirit is marked by the language of initiation in Mark 1:11, 'You are my beloved son, with you I am well-pleased.' The point of the opening episode of Mark's narrative is to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is 'the Son of God' (Mk 1:1), and the subsequent episodes in the narrative serve to demonstrate Christ's superior authority and power over demons (Mk 1:21–28; 3:7–12; 5:1–20; 7:24–30), over disease and death (1:29–45; 3:1–6; 5:21–43; 6:35–36; 7:31–37; 8:22–26; 10:46–52), and over the forces of nature (4:35–41; 6:45–52). As Son of God Jesus has the authority to forgive sins (2:1–12) and to properly interpret and apply the law of Moses vis-à-vis the merely human interpretations of the Pharisees (2:21–28; 7:1–23). While such concepts at least affirm a functional agency christology in which God's chosen agent is given divine authority, other statements in the Gospel of Mark suggest a christology of pre-incarnate existence.

The concept of the Father sending the Son does not by itself necessarily require a pre-incarnate existence, as it may also be used in the sense of sending a prophet or other human representative. Thus, when Christ says, 'Whoever receives one child like this in my name receives me, and whoever receives me does not receive me, but him who sent me' (Mk 9:37), the language may be one of agency. But at other times the concept of sending best fits with the notion of pre-incarnate existence. In Mark 12:35–37, Jesus appeals to David's words in Psalm 110:1, 'The Lord said to my Lord,' to argue that the Christ had to be more than simply the son of David. In fact, he was David's 'Lord.' Merely functional categories do not suffice to explain Jesus's argument here, for the physical descendent of David would not be regarded as superior to his famed ancestor. A similar brief glimpse into an ontological reality is encountered in the transfiguration narrative in 9:2–9.

While the words and works of Christ portrayed in the Gospel of Mark are formulated to convince the reader that Jesus of Nazareth had unparalleled authority in the earthly realm, the entire plotline moves the reader simultaneously toward the narrative climax and goal: the death and resurrection of Christ as a ransom for sin. In the passion narrative we find a straightforward account of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, including the institution of the memorial supper commemorating Christ's body and blood (14:22–25). Though the resurrection narrative appears truncated, the testimony of the angels is quite clear: 'He has risen; he is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid him' (16:6). The resurrection of Christ, in both its anticipation and in its fulfillment, is presented as bodily, not spiritual, as the testimony of the angels confirms.

In Matthew and Luke, the narrative is similar, though both go to greater lengths to demonstrate the human lineage of Christ, emphasizing his identity as a particular human playing a key role in salvation history (Mt 1:1–17; Lk 3:23–38). These Gospel narratives also include the detail of the miraculous virgin birth (Mt 1:18–25; Lk 1:26–56; 2:1–38). In Matthew's account the text assigns the name 'Immanuel' from Isaiah 8:10, translating the name as 'God with us' (Mt 1:23). It is at the point of the passion narrative that Matthew and Luke make more explicit the physical, fleshly sufferings and resurrection of Christ from the grave. Matthew includes far more details about the placement of Christ's body than does Mark, and when the women meet Jesus when fleeing the empty tomb they 'worshiped Him' (Mt 28:9), as did the disciples prior to his ascension to heaven (28:17). In Luke's account Christ confronted the disciples' belief that he was merely a spirit by pointing out the fleshly quality of his resurrection body: 'See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have' (Lk 24:39). When they persisted in their unbelief, Christ even took fish and ate with them (24:42–43).

In John's Gospel, likely dating from the late first century and overlapping with some of the early catholic writings examined in chapters 10–14 of this study, the incarnational language and imagery of the canonical writings reached its climax. Christ is cast as the Word of God, who was both the only-begotten God and distinct from God (Jn 1:1–2, 18). This divine Word 'became flesh'

(σὰρξ ἐγένετο), truly suffered and died in the flesh (19:17–37), was buried (19:38–42), and rose again in a body of flesh (20:1–18). In presenting himself to the disciples, Jesus famously challenged Thomas to touch the scars of his body to see that he had indeed been raised in the same flesh that had been crucified (20:26–27), to which Thomas responded, 'My Lord and my God!' (20:28). And this same concern for the reality of the fleshly existence of Christ against docetism is observed in the Johannine Epistles (1 Jn 1:1–2; 4:2–3; 2 Jn 7).

HISTORY AS HERMENEUTIC: A PROPOSAL

One question naturally arises from the preceding survey of some of the alleged seeds of an incarnational narrative found in first century Christian documents. Are we not reading these documents in conformity with a presupposed incarnational narrative and in light of the later christology of the early second century catholic writers? It must be granted that these documents could be read canonically under the arches of an incarnational meta-narrative, as they have been by orthodox Christians for nineteen hundred years. But is such a reading legitimate? Is it rather to be preferred that the New Testament texts present a diverse and developing christological awareness that eventually leads to incarnational christology by the end of the first century?

In his *Christology in the Making*, Dunn notes, 'So far as our evidence is concerned *the Fourth Evangelist was the first Christian writer to conceive clearly of the personal pre-existence of the Logos-Son and to present it as a fundamental part of his message.*'[20] Dunn's overall thesis is that prior to the Gospel of John at the end of the first century, the Hellenistic church's christology was a wisdom or Adam christology, not an incarnational christology involving a pre-existent Son or Logos. He concludes, 'the revolutionary significance of v. 14 [of John 1] may well be that it marks not only the transition in the

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[20] James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2d edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 249. The italics are in the original.

thought of the poem from pre-existence to incarnation, but also the transition from impersonal personification to actual person.'[21]

However, such a late-coming development of an incarnational christology as posited by Dunn would not allow enough time for the widespread and foundational presence of the incarnational narrative among catholic communities early in the second century. Dunn's proposal would leave only ten to twenty years for a provincial Johannine incarnational christology to become a widespread catholic incarnational christology, a historical proposition that seems highly improbable. We must recall that it took Marcion's unique theology many decades to spread throughout the Mediterranean world after its distinguishing christology had been well-formulated. One might therefore reasonably assume that at least a similar length of time would be necessary for catholic Christian identity to be established after the initial formulation of the essential elements of the incarnational narrative. A late first century formulation simply will not work.

In light of these problems and the seemingly untenable position of Dunn, it seems that we are left with a few possibilities with regard to christological development in the first century and the testimony of the New Testament and in particular the Gospel of John. These are simply suggestions for a first century situation that would help explain the widespread confessional center of early catholic Christianity in the early second century.

First, if one insists that the majority of New Testament witnesses attest to an adoptionist or agency christology and that a genuinely incarnational narrative is only to be found in the Gospel of John, it may be necessary to revisit the possibility that the Fourth Gospel itself should be dated earlier than the end of the second century, perhaps in the 60s, as a few scholars have proposed.[22] This would allow at least three decades for the expansion of such an incarnational narrative to move from the Johannine community to establish itself as a central mark of catholic identity in the late first and early second centuries.

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[21] Ibid., 243. The italics are in the original.

[22] See, e.g., John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 254–311.

Second, it may be that the New Testament materials dating from the 50s to 70s should after all be read as part of a rapidly developing trajectory toward an incarnational narrative, including the personal pre-incarnate existence of the Son.[23] That is, when interpretational decisions need to be made regarding whether 'sending' passages like Romans 8:3, Galatians 4:4, or Philippians 2:5–11 refer to an impersonal wisdom christology or whether they refer to a christology of personal pre-incarnate existence, the latter should be regarded as most probable. This is a situation in which the resulting historical situation of the early second century should inform one's hermeneutic, for the most probable reading of ambiguous texts is the reading that best explains the rapid reception and expansion of the incarnational narrative among the next generation of catholic Christian communities. Thus, 'agency' and 'adoptionist' narratives must be read in light of a presupposed incarnational metanarrative, a possibility I suggested in the first chapter of this study.[24]

The third consideration is the apparent need for a catalyst that would affect the transition from the first century to the second century situation. That is, the New Testament incarnational christology is often portrayed as arising in a precarious religious and philosophical historical context. Sometimes it is viewed as one of many diverse portraits of Christ in the first century. Or it is seen as the unique christology of an isolated Johannine community. Or it is regarded as the latest product of theological development late in the first century. In any case, the assertion that God became a man who suffered and died does not seem to be the doctrine most fit for survival, especially in an increasingly Greek context that would have found such a notion philosophically repugnant. Grillmeier notes, 'A Greek could certainly think of no greater opposition than that of "Logos" to "sarx", especially if the idea of suffering and death was associated with it.'[25] Thus, in this

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[23] See, e.g., Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, 2d edn, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 9–32.

[24] See above, pages 23–26.

[25] Ibid., 31.

unfavorable climate it seems that a powerful catalyst would be necessary to lift and propel a distinctly incarnational narrative from an apparently disadvantaged position to a place of obvious favor.

I would suggest that early teachers with acknowledged inter-ecclesiastical authority were primarily responsible for consciously defining and defending this narrative from the middle to late first century.[26] Many of those perceived to have been the apostolic founders of Christianity may have actually promoted the basic themes and movements of this incarnational narrative in their preaching and teaching among geographically widespread communities. Had there been a plurality of equally non-authoritative christological narratives among first and second generation Christians without clear authoritative voices to promote an incarnational christological unity, it does not seem probable that the unique incarnational narrative would have been as central, foundational, and widespread as we find it among early second century catholic Christians.

This proposed solution is in harmony with early Christian historiographical and heresiological tendencies to see an early catholic church that enjoyed an identity centered on a shared confession concerning Christ's person and work. It also lends credibility to the idea that some of the apostles or at least their close associates lived late into the first century and continued to regulate and preserve Christian teachings. With the lack of a complete and authoritative collection of New Testament scriptures and very few clear appeals to such documents among the earliest catholic writers, it seems most plausible that human teachers—perhaps the actual surviving disciples of the apostles—lived and traveled in the regions of Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Achaia, and Rome, and thus continued to exercise doctrinal and ecclesiastical

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[26] Because the earliest Christian missions in most places where this christology dominated had begun in the 30s and was apparently well-established by respected apostolic personalities like Paul, Peter, and John by at least the 60s, this leaves approximately forty years from 70 CE to 110 CE for an incarnational narrative to effectively displace any other competing or more primitive forms of christology that may have existed prior to the 60s.

authority in preserving and passing on the incarnational narrative even until the last decades of the first century. And the strength of the incarnational narrative in western Asia Minor at the dawn of the second century lends particular support to the early tradition that the apostle John himself lived to the end of the first century, nurtured disciples like Polycarp, and promoted a clear and simple incarnational narrative of the God who became flesh to suffer, die, and rise again. It also becomes conceivable that this authoritative figure was the personal inspiration behind the fourth Gospel and epistles attributed to him.

To sum up, because of the early, foundational, and widespread state of the incarnational narrative as the centering norm of catholic Christianity and its likely formulation and promotion in the middle to third quarter of the first century, one is tempted to suggest that this normative center developed primarily as a result of apostolic self-interpretation among the fledgling Christian communities. That is, as they reflected on the content of their own teaching and preaching in light of the Christ event and passed this content on to their disciples, their 'gospel' narrative was increasingly narrowed to clear and concise statements regarding the person and work of Christ. And because these assertions about Christ were elements that clearly distinguished them from Judaism, paganism, and other philosophies and religions prevalent in the Mediterranean world, it naturally became the primary means of self-identification. This, I believe, was a realization already in the middle to late first century as the discontinuities with previous and contemporary theologies and communities became apparent. Though the incarnational narrative does not exhaust the content of early catholic Christianity, it does summarize what the early catholic Christians regarded as the most important distinctions of the new faith founded by Christ and his apostles.

THE FINAL CURTAIN

In the 1984 blockbuster, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, Dr. Jones embarked on a quest to retrieve magic *Sankara* stones from the forces of evil. Besides bringing the bearer untold power, those fist-sized rocks also had a less profound—but more peculiar—property. When placed in close proximity to each other, the crystals inside the stones glowed brilliantly.

For several generations historians have become increasingly uncomfortable with descriptions like 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy,' or even with appellations like 'Christian,' 'Gnostic,' and 'Non-Christian,' simply because they impose upon a text, tradition, teacher, or group a label that assumed some measure of normative doctrine or standard of identity. Thus, for example, calling a particular text 'catholic' assumed one could defend a coherent and consistent definition of 'catholic' Christianity for the period from which the document arose. Or labeling a particular teacher 'Gnostic' rather than 'Christian' assumed that a normative Christianity existed, which therefore had an exclusive claim to that identity. For many, the phenomena of the evidence seem to rule out the fair use of such labels, as several diverse and competing groups claimed the name 'Christian' and called their opponents 'heretics.' It appears to many scholars today, therefore, that the historical stratum of the second century is strewn with numerous fist-sized rocks all claiming to be the vehicles of spiritual power, and that such claims were, in the end, relative to the attitudes of those who held them in the second century—and relative to the presuppositions of those who behold them today.

In this study I have argued that something of a normative core of 'catholic' Christianity had indeed crystallized by the beginning of the second century. To pick up my Indiana Jones illustration, it appears that certain stones from the second century, when held together, glowed with brilliant familiarity. The distinct incarnational narrative—the God-man who died and rose again in the flesh—constituted the core of self-identity among those who regarded themselves and their far-flung brethren as fellow, or 'catholic,' Christians.

In light of the thesis of this study, how should we think differently about diverse texts, traditions, and teachers? In my analysis of various relics of the second century, I have shown that each text—and the teacher or tradition it represents—often had a discernible christological narrative, which narrative approximated the catholic incarnational narrative to varying degrees. Sometimes the narrative appears to have been completely intact, as in the case of almost all texts that have come down to us as part of a growing collection of 'catholic' documents (see chapters 3–15). A few texts approximate the incarnational narrative closely enough to be capable of varying interpretations (*Gos. Pet.*; *Odes Sol.*; *Sent. Sextus*).

Still others follow closely until the final point of resurrection and salvation of the body of flesh, as such a view placed an ontological value on the redemption of—rather than the escape from—the physical aspect of humanity (*Treat. Res.*; *Test. Truth*). Another group of texts advanced a loose incarnation, in which the heavenly person distanced himself from the earthly at crucial places in the narrative (*Apoc. Pet.*). Finally, others completely denied anything like an 'incarnation,' relaying instead a narrative in which the spiritual redeemer or revealer took on nothing of physical humanity (*Acts John*).

Figure 38: Diagram of catholic and non-catholic texts indicating proximity to and orientation toward incarnational and non-incarnational narratival centers.
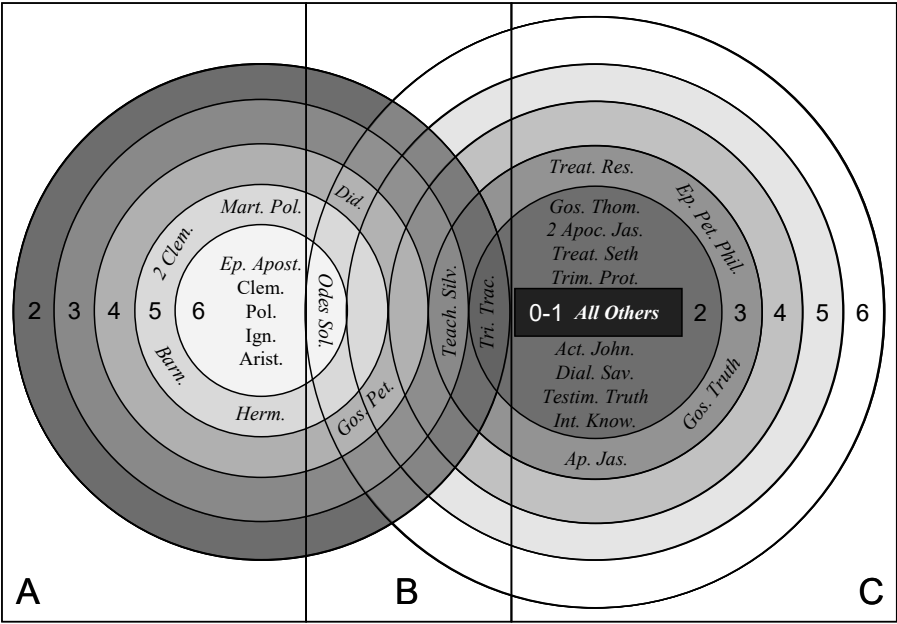
In Figure 38 above, numbered concentric rings indicate levels of agreement with a full incarnational narrative, using the elements of

Ignatius of Antioch's full narrative as a workable standard.[27] Category A (ranging in conformity from 5 to 6) contains unambiguous incarnational texts that clearly fall in a catholic Christian context. Category B (ranging in conformity from 2 to 6) consists of marginally catholic or marginally non-catholic texts that are either silent or ambiguously affirm aspects of the incarnational narrative without explicitly denying key movements of the narrative. Category C (ranging in conformity from 0 to 3) includes all texts that either explicitly reject the incarnational narrative or have so few incarnational elements that their theological centers appear to lie elsewhere. This chart, which summarizes the evidence and arguments of the study, indicates a clear incarnational center of early catholic Christianity (Category A), a clear non-incarnational orientation among non-catholic traditions (Category C), and only a few texts that, due to their silence or ambiguity, could be read in either an incarnational or non-incarnational direction (Category B).

Given the broad spectrum of diversity we find among the relics of the second century, including those that held to the incarnational narrative, it seems that scholars should begin to think more in terms of degrees of approximation to or distance from the incarnational narrative that marked the center of catholic Christian identity. To return to my opening illustration one last time, this would mean that certain stones from the second century glowed more brightly than others when brought in proximity to the true *Sankaras*. In this case we think more about a clearly definable center of catholic identity that glows brightly while certain texts, traditions, and teachers of the second century can be plotted either nearer to or farther from that center.

Based strictly on outward appearances, therefore, it would have often been difficult in the second century to decisively determine whether a particular teacher, tradition, or text was authentically incarnational or not, and instant determinations of

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[27] For example, a conformity of '6' (including *Epistula Apostolorum*, Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Aristides) indicates that the text affirms all six movements of the incarnational narrative, a '1' (including most non-catholic texts) indicates that the text affirms only one element of the catholic incarnational narrative.

'orthodoxy' or 'heresy' would have been difficult. This, in turn, would have caused an intentional development of external and visible means of identifying those persons who held to the incarnational christology of the catholic Christians. I believe the history of second century catholic Christianity reveals the means that developed to promote, protect, and preserve the incarnational confessional core: a patterned creed, a defined canon, and an authoritative episcopal cathedra. By the end of the second century this threefold standard of canon, creed, and cathedra would begin to serve as the external marks of catholic identity, always protecting, though sometimes overshadowing, the earlier core of catholic self-definition—the incarnational narrative of the one true Savior, 'who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord' (Ign. *Eph.* 7.2).

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